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AN IDYL OF THE WABASH

AN IDYL OF THE WABASH

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

ANNA NICHOLAS

Made out o' truck 'at's jes' a-goin' to waste
'Cause smart folks thinks it's altogether too
Outrageous common.—RILEY

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TO MY MOTHER

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Herewith together you have flower and thorn,
Both rose and brier, for thus together grow
Bitter and sweet, but wherefore none may know.

—ALDRICH.

AN IDYL OF THE WABASH

AN IDYL OF THE WABASH

WHEN Miss Callista Rogers first came from her Vermont home to the little Indiana town of Honeyport, on the Wabash, she had a sense of almost perilous adventure—something like that felt by the pioneer women who followed up the ever-advancing and now forever vanished frontier.

"It is so very far away," she said to her family before starting, "and while, of course, there are no Indians and no danger of having one's scalp taken, or anything of that sort, still, things will be queer and the people can't be expected to be like those in Vermont, not having had the same advantages."

After she reached Honeyport she wrote to her sister that the people were queer, but that they seemed friendly, and she thought she should get along real well. At that time Miss Callista was not much past her first youth, but she had lived

long enough to have imbibed the very firm conviction that New England opinions and New England ways were the only opinions and only ways worth considering seriously. Holding such belief, it might naturally have been expected that she would come into conflict with her new associates, but a fair degree of discretion prevented her from airing her views too aggressively, and her wholesome humor and evident kindliness of spirit led her Hoosier friends to be indulgent to such of her unflattering opinions as were inadvertently betrayed and to regard her with considerable favor.

She had come to Indiana to teach school, and to Honeyport through the intercession in her behalf of Deacon Knox, an old family friend at home whose second cousin had married Rev. Calvin Evans, pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Honeyport.

In those days—it was soon after the war—teaching, especially in the rural districts and village communities, was not the complicated and exacting science it has since become. Miss Callista was fairly well grounded in the common English branches; in the way of accomplishments she knew a little music, and as a crowning

quirement had an acquaintance with the rudi-
ents of the Latin language. This last she was
t called upon to teach, but the consciousness
at she was on familiar terms—hardly a speak-
g acquaintance, to be sure—with the ancient
ngue was a soure of infinite satisfaction to her;
gave her a sense of superiority and power.
There were some preliminaries to be under-
ne before she was officially authorized to teach
e young idea of Honeyport, an examination
ong the rest, but this was not severe, and she
od it successfully. As for the methods of
aching to be adopted, there were no fixed
les as now under the elaborate and inflexible
stem in vogue. She was free to follow her
n judgment, which was for the most part
od, being based on New England common
nse and a power of adaptation to the pupils'
dividual needs which every successful teacher
ust have. So she taught in one of the two
nools of Honeyport very acceptably to the
ople, who were easy-going and not yet
fected by the "higher education" fad.

But Miss Callista did not so easily adapt her-
f to her new environment in all respects. She
d not like the appearance of the town and the

surrounding country, to begin with. The coun try was too level. Her soul yearned for the hill as the souls of those born among them must d till memory fails. She missed the blue dis tances, the lights and shadows, the feeling c companionship the mountains gave. The prairi was monotonous and the sky shut down to close. The village itself was trying to her sens of thrift and order. She could not free he mind concerning it in her letters home, for sh was resolved to give nothing but agreeable im pressions to the mother and sister back in th trim and prim but picturesque Vermont town

To Mrs. Evans, the pastor's wife, she unbur dened her mind when her sensibilities were to deeply outraged. In Mrs. Evans she had foun a congenial acquaintance. That lady had live in Indiana for so many years that she had ac quired some of the habits and peculiarities c what Miss Callista called the natives, but sh had been born in New England and cherishe its traditions. Consequently, she sympathize in a measure with the strictures made by th new teacher, but she was a discreet woman, a became a minister's wife, and the confidence poured into her ears went no further. Ur

derstanding this, Miss Callista felt free to express her true sentiments on all matters. She was especially indignant over the slipshod ways of the village.

"It's perfectly scandalous," she said, "the way they let the grass grow in the gutters and the way they let the pigs and cattle run loose in the street. They ought to have more pride. Why, when I rode up Main street in the Paw Paw hack that first day and saw the sidewalks almost covered by high grass, and cows and pigs lying right on the walks, and people stepping around them, I expected to find slovenly housekeeping, too. Like town, like people, I thought. Didn't turn out jest that way, I'm free to confess. There are some very nice, neat housekeepers here."

Another peculiarity of the natives excited Miss Callista's scorn.

"I never see," she told Mrs. Evans, "such a dowdy set as they be. Why, they don't care how they look. The women don't dress up of afternoons, and farmers' wives don't put on a fresh dud when they come to town; jest wear their old limpsy calicoes and sunbunnets. The men ain't a mite better, though, to be sure, that's

the women's fault. Husbands are much what the wives make 'em, as you know. I don't set no great store by fashions and folderols myself," she went on, "but it's certainly a dreadful shame they don't slick up more when they go to meeting—particularly the Campbellites. Go over to that church an' you won't see a man with a starched shirt bosom. Not that I look at such things, specially, but if you have eyes you must see. Clean enough, all of 'em, mebbe, but no stiffenin'. I'd like to clear starch 'em all once—men, women and children.

"And there is another thing. Folks around here surmise and wonder, but can't guess one of the main reasons why I set up my own little housekeeping. Of course, in the first place, I wanted to economize, but, Mrs. Evans, another great thing was that I jest wanted something good to eat. I do' know as I'm so very dainty about my eating, an' I do' know *but* I be. Anyhow, I don't like the cooking I get at most places. Of course, if you'd felt clear to take me it would a' been all right s' far as the table's concerned, but most places they don't suit me. They can't make a good cup o' tea; they don't know how to make yeast bread, and not one of 'em can

make a decent pie. I will say for 'em, though, that they can fry chicken to beat all creation.''

Miss Callista conceived a peculiar animosity toward the religious sect variously known as ''Disciples,'' ''Christians'' and Campbellites.'' Just why was not clear. It may have been due to the fact that she had never heard of the denomination back in Vermont, and being, as she considered, a purely western product, it was, therefore, to be distrusted as somehow unorthodox and subversive of pious principles. The sect was numerously represented in that locality, and the congregation which worshiped in one of the three churches of Honeyport was larger than either the Methodists or Presbyterians could muster.

''I shan't call 'em Disciples,'' sniffed Miss Callista, ''jest as if they were as good as the Twelve, an' I shan't call 'em Christians. The idear! Jest as if they had a patent on the name. They don't like to be called Campbellites, but I shall call 'em Campbellites the hull time. How any reasonable human being can believe in the docterns of that church does beat me. An' there they'll set an' listen to jest the scrappiest kind o' sermons, when, by crossin'

the street, they could hear your husband's stirrin' discourses."

It will be seen from this that Miss Callista was not a woman of broad mind, and that, though she made her opinions plain to the comprehension, they were not expressed in that correct and elegant language so desirable in the teachers of youth. It is but just, however, to say that she was aware of some of these verbal lapses. As she herself remarked:

"Nobody understands grammar, and what is proper language, better than I do, and in school I always take great care to speak correctly. When I come home, though, it's too much trouble to be thinking of the parts of speech, and I drop into an easier sort o' talk, as I put on a kitchen apron or an old pair o' shoes."

Her idioms and accents she was unconscious of, and therefore could not drop. The born New Englander seldom does. She would say "Indianar," and "idear," and "Mariar" to the end of her days. She was quick to detect what she considered errors in others, however.

"'Bucket!' Don't let me hear you say 'bucket,'" she would tell her pupils. "It's a ridiculous word; say 'pail.' And don't say

you 'reckon' or 'low' you'll do so and so; say 'guess.'"

Miss Callista had come West to teach because, even if she could get a school at her home, with all the eager candidates in competition for every place, better salaries were paid in Indiana. For her own part she would have preferred to stay in Vermont, even with the scant wages of the district school, but she had a mother and sister who needed her earnings, and it was for them she started out to seek a better fortune. The mother was a widow with a tiny home to call her own and an income hardly in proportion; the sister, a fragile girl with the New England scourge, consumption, already making its signs visible. Miss Callista must be the bread winner, and she went bravely about her task. She loved her family and her home; she had none of the self-assertiveness that is needed for those who would get on in the world; she dreaded the separation from her dear ones, and yet it never occurred to her to rebel against fate that made such a trial possible. She did not dream that she was heroic, and yet it is in such actions that the heroism of the latter days is

found—a heroism not less than that which led the knights of old on their crusades.

Many and many a day in her new abiding place homesickness pressed upon her like a tangible weight; her heart ached for a sight of dear faces and familiar scenes; the very sun shining in the heavens took on a forbidding look, and the birds sang a melancholy tune. But if the poor, lonely little woman wept it was when no one knew. She kept a brave face and wrote cheery letters to the invalid at home. Every penny of her salary but that which supplied her own barest needs went to make the life of that invalid easier. She not only made no complaint over her own deprivations and sacrifices; she made the sacrifices gladly and did not know them to be such. Women are often like that. If the beneficiaries accepted the gifts as a matter of course and without appreciation of the life that was being given also, why, that was not unusual either. The human creature is often so.

The years went on until five had passed since Miss Callista had seen the faces of her kin and the blue Vermont hills. At the beginning she had not dreamed that so long a time would elapse before she could return, but one thing

and another had delayed her visit. The invalid sister had needed so many things. The malady made inroads and delicacies were wanted to keep up her strength; medicines, too, and the doctor must be paid. Once a famous specialist came up from Boston to see her, and that cost money. This fifth winter just ended had been spent by the ailing one in Florida, but she was now at home again, and a turn of fortune in the shape of a railroad rate war made it suddenly possible for Miss Callista to go to see her and the dear mother. The cost of travel, the rival passenger agents declared, was less than that of staying at home. So, the spring term having just ended, she joyfully went her way.

She was in time for the end. Though it was early June and the sun shone with torrid strength on the Honeyport prairie, and the roses were in bloom, it was not so surely summer but that a wintry blast swept down from the north through the Vermont valleys and undid all the healing wrought by the Florida airs. The ailing sister was cut down as a lily by the frost. She died in Miss Callista's arms—faithful arms that had scarce time to rest before they held the mother's weary form while her soul breathed itself away.

The mother had lived for the stricken daughter, and that beloved life ended, she, too, was done with earth.

The summer vacation was not over when Miss Callista came back to Honeyport. The charm of her childhood's home was gone. Later in life the glamour of the mountains would come back to her and her heart would yearn for a sight of them, but now they chilled her and she was glad to return to the once despised village on the Wabash, with the unbroken, shadowless landscape and the level horizon. Out of the old home life were left only memories and a few household gods. When some of these treasures were unloaded at the door of her Indiana home—a heavy oaken secretary, a spindle-legged table, a straight-backed, comfortless-looking chair—the men who lifted them into place wondered that she went to the expense of shipping such old-fashioned furnishings when she might have bought finer ones at home for less money. But the women who saw them did not wonder—women who had found for themselves how the heart clings to inanimate things when they alone are left to speak of the dead.

So Miss Callista, permanently transplanted,

settled down in a bit of a cottage next to the Presbyterian parsonage, still occupied by her friends, the Evanses, and resumed her occupation of teaching. There was no one now to save for and deny herself for, but, being an unselfish creature, this only brought her pain. Nevertheless, as time went on life grew more comfortable for her. She indulged in an occasional bit of finery; now and then she went on an excursion somewhere. Once she went to Indianapolis to attend the state fair, and once she went to Chicago and came back dizzy and bewildered, glad to be in the quiet home away from the busy whirl.

The years went on until more than fifteen had passed since she set foot on Hoosier soil. All this time she had not escaped the speculations all normally constituted people are bound to indulge in concerning the matrimonial prospects of their spinster friends. It was assumed that she was not only ready, but anxious to marry when the opportunity and the man offered, and kindly neighbors kept a lookout for both. Miss Callista alone seemed indifferent. Apparently she took no thought of such possibilities. She was polite in a sedate way to the occasional

marriageable men who showed a disposition to hover around her, but she gave encouragement to none. Her Honeyport friends suspected that she had wasted her heart on some unappreciative Vermont Yankee, but this was not the case.

The truth was that the marriageable male beings who had come within her range of possibilities had not been quite to her liking. The farmers who constituted the most of these eligibles were too rough and careless in dress, too much given to tobacco chewing and too loudly hilarious in their conversation to please her somewhat fastidious taste. She may not have cherished a definite ideal of the man who would meet her requirements, but she had a clear conception of what would not do. So the years had gone swiftly by, bringing few changes in the routine of her life, or even in her appearance. She was a plump and comely body, and in some respects more attractive than in her younger days, for lines of care and anxiety and homesickness had given way to placid contentment in her work and in every-day affairs. She looked forward to no change in her mode of life or her experiences, but, as so often happens when change comes into an uneventful existence, it comes un-

expectedly and creates a complete transformation in the little world.

Mrs. Evans, still her nearest neighbor and closest friend, fell ill and came swiftly down to death's door. Before she passed through she said to Miss Callista, who was her faithful attendant:

"When I am gone Calvin will marry again after a proper time. He will; oh, yes. It is a man's way, and it will be Calvin's way. He will need somebody to look after him. I want you to be the one, and I have told him so. You will know how and will do for him as I would."

This was said gaspingly between paroxysms of pain, but with all the firmness and decision for which Mrs. Evans was noted when at her best estate. It was the supreme proof of a woman's faith in another that she could put her husband into her keeping, and, having given it, she closed her eyes and opened them no more.

This last communication made a powerful impression on Miss Callista. It was a startling surprise, but she accepted it unquestioningly as a guide to her future.

What Mrs. Evans wanted Mr. Evans to do had always been done, and she had not the faintest

doubt that he would follow his wife's instructions in this, as he had been accustomed to do in all other matters.

She grieved for her friend's death, but almost insensibly she began to adjust herself to coming conditions. The bereaved man assumed the conventional appearance of gentle melancholy by which the newly-made widower is so easily recognized, and his earliest sermons had a tenderly pathetic tone that she, in common with the other women of the congregation, considered very touching and appropriate. But even in this sacred stage of his widowerhood she felt herself looking upon him with a new interest and a secret sense of possession. She had been brought up to revere ministers as a class, and had always had a respectful regard for Mr. Evans because of his profession and because he had been kind to her. He was not her ideal of manly beauty, being gaunt of frame and bald of head; moreover, he was twenty years older than she, being nearly sixty. However, she recognized the fact that it was not for her to make age a barrier, since no widower of sixty was likely to consider himself other than desirable even to a maid of twenty.

She also confessed to herself that she had always considered the wife of a minister blessed among women, and that, while she had never hoped to marry one, the sudden and unexpected prospect of doing so was very agreeable indeed. She felt herself fitted to the labor of smoothing life's pathway for a servant of the Lord. Not that she could assist in sermon-writing, as she had suspected the first Mrs. Evans of doing, but she could minister to his comfort in a more material way. She could take household cares from his shoulders; she could make him presentable to the public; she could keep him posted on many ins and outs of the parish; above all, she could feed him well, and she held that of all men ministers needed to be well fed. She considered it a reasonable proposition that a man could administer a far higher degree of spiritual consolation to his flock when his stomach was comfortably filled than when it was empty or dyspeptic from poor food.

The very church building began to take on a new aspect. She saw that it needed a new carpet and a coat of paint, and her mind leaped forward to the time when, as minister's wife, she could have an influence in bringing such im-

provements about. But she kept all such thoughts concealed in her own heart. Her manner toward her pastor was more sedate and dignified than ever. The knowledge imparted by her deceased friend had given her a self-consciousness which put an end to the little neighborly attentions she had been accustomed to offer when the wife was alive, such as sending over a favorite dish, or now and then an embroidered handkerchief, or even taking his hose from the mending basket and darning them in the highest style of the art. Now, she thought, such things would "make talk"—dreadful bugbear of lone women—and she left Mr. Evans entirely to the mercies of Nancy, his inefficient and elderly serving woman, and to other female parishioners who, with husbands to approve their actions, might safely venture where she could not tread.

It was the more easy to give up her accustomed service in her reverend neighbor's house from the fact that her spare hours were now largely devoted to the entertainment of the Littledale twins—the three-year-old children of the Rev. Amos Littledale, the Campbellite minister, who lived across the street.

Miss Callista's animosity to the Campbellites had in no wise abated, and was generally understood in the community, but the feeling was directed to them as a sect and not as individuals. Certainly, it did not include the babies, especially such sweet and attractive ones as these. Long before their mother died, several months back, her heart had gone out to those twins, and when they manifested a fondness for her, based though she knew it was on her supply of buns and cookies, she became their devoted friend. She had once confided to Mrs. Evans, with a maidenly blush, that if she had been married and the Lord had seen fit to bless her with children, she would have liked twins.

Mr. Littledale's young sister was his housekeeper and guardian of the babies, and Miss Callista, seeing that the burden of care was heavy for the girl, cheerfully relieved and aided her in many ways. It would do no harm to make the young things happy while it could be done, she thought. "It wasn't at all likely they would have much chance to be happy if their father married that flirty young Mattie Stone, over on the West pike, as seemed likely. Strange that a man couldn't show bet-

ter judgment when he married, especially when he took a second partner. There was Mr. Littledale, all of thirty-one, or maybe thirty-two years old, and Mat Stone wasn't over twenty, and a giddy piece, too. There was Jane Embree, steady and settled, and of a suitable age, and willing, and he never so much as looked her way. But law sakes, what could you expect of a man and a preacher at that, in a church that had the hull New Testament for its creed and no confession of faith and no definite thing you could get at to tell what the members did believe, or why they couldn't be just plain Baptists, or even Methodists or Presbyterians, who will immerse you if you insist on it?''

But, with all her absorption in the infants Miss Callista did not fail to keep a watchful eye on Widower Evans. She was a woman and not unobservant, and had therefore not failed to note the peculiarities of widowers. She knew at about what period deepest grief began to lift its clouds and life present some attractions once more; it was a very early period in a majority of cases. She could invariably detect the first indications that the bereaved one was ''able to take notice,'' as cynical old ladies have it; she knew well the

signs that he was not only contemplating further matrimonial possibilities in a general way, but also when he had ceased to generalize and had fixed his eye upon a concrete individual as a desirable consoler. She saw Mr. Evans emerge into the first of these stages, her proximity as next-door neighbor being a point of vantage. He shaved oftener than he had been accustomed to doing; he buttoned his frock coat when he went out, instead of allowing it to hang open in a saggy, slovenly way; he carried himself more erectly, and with almost a jaunty air. Before his best coat was in the least shiny he began to wear it every day, and bought a new one for Sundays.

Miss Callista observed this piece of extravagance with a thrill; it was significant of immediate activity in the matrimonial field. It was barely six months since Mrs. Evans had died, but her expectant successor considered it probable that he would wish to marry as soon as the conventional year of mourning had expired, and it was a matter of course that the necessary preliminaries should be arranged before that date.

Almost unconsciously she began to preen herself like a little bird in the spring. Her brown

hair waved with an extra crinkle; she put a fresh bow on her summer bonnet and wore a pink ribbon at her throat where brown had been. People said how young Miss Callista looked and how well she "held her age." They also began to say what a suitable wife she would make for Mr. Evans; some of them, in the free-spoken rural way, said it to her, and made her blush and try to look angry. But they began to say, too, that Mr. Evans seemed to be looking with a favorable eye upon the Widow Jackson, out on West Main street. He had been seen to walk home with her from prayer-meeting, and he dropped in with what some considered needless frequency to administer spiritual consolation to the widow's son, who was in the last stages of what was known as "decline."

This information gave Miss Callista a shock. Could it be possible, she asked herself, that he was about to disregard his wife's dying injunction? He showed no indications of any leaning in her direction, save that he had come over once or twice in a neighborly way, and when other neighbors were present, to sit on her little porch and chat in the twilight. But he had never walked home with her from prayer-meet-

ing, though she attended regularly and it was right in his way. She cogitated over the matter a good deal, and as a result of her reflections decided upon what she considered a bold move and a counter attraction to the widow's blandishments. She resolved to invite him to supper, no matter if folks did say she was setting her cap for him. She wasn't doing anything of the kind, and she wasn't anyways anxious, she said to herself, to marry him, but something was due to her friend Mrs. Evans; and certainly that lady would not approve of Mrs. Jackson. And what a poor figure she would cut at the head of the missionary society and the sewing circle, sure enough! Perhaps, it was her (Miss Callista's) duty gently to remind him of his late partner's wishes. So she spent the most of one Saturday afternoon in concocting the preacher's favorite dishes, and when they were ready to serve, stepped to the back fence, and, in a casual way, as if it were a sudden thought, asked him to come over and have a bit of supper. She said, she knew Nancy had gone to see her folks, and she thought he might enjoy a cup of tea and something warm instead of a cold bite by himself.

He came with alacrity, and was presently installed at the table with Miss Callista opposite and a Littledale twin at each side of her. It had seemed to her that the presence of the twins would at once preserve the proprieties and offer no barrier to confidential conversation. The babies behaved like little angels, but there was no conversation that all the world might not have heard. She plied her guest with fried chicken, with the lightest of rolls, with strawberry shortcake and with his favorite temperance tipple of diluted blackberry cordial, put up by her own hands the year before. He ate heartily and joyously, and made a variety of facetious remarks to the twins, but he went home without so much as a look indicating a thought of his wife's sacred injunction.

Miss Callista did not like it. She took the twins to their gate and kissed them good-night with an abruptness and irritation of manner hitherto unknown to them. She was beginning to have a little resentment on her own account as well as on that of the departed Mrs. Evans, whose request was being ignored. Her vanity was touched. Queer taste a man had, she thought, who could see anything in that Widow

Jackson better than he saw in her; and everybody knew the widow couldn't cook a decent meal to save her life.

Miss Callista was modest, but no woman is so unduly self-depreciating that she does not secretly recognize her own superiority to certain other women.

But the supper did have its effect, after all, for during the weeks following Mr. Evans fell into the way of walking home with Miss Callista after Sunday evening service and of coming oftener to sit on her porch in the dusk. But he did not discontinue his visits to the widow. The situation was quite interesting to the parishioners and the village gossips, and people began to take sides. The women discussed the matter over the back fences, and the men who sat around the grocery stores wagered small sums on the outcome.

One day in August Miss Callista was surprised by the receipt of a letter. It was from Mr. Evans, who had been spending a week or so with a sister in Lafayette. It read thus:

"Miss Callista—Esteemed Friend: I take this means of addressing you in regard to an important matter. When my lamented Jane was in her last illness, she foresaw that

I should find the burden of loneliness too great to bear, and she advised me to marry again after a proper time had passed, and strongly recommended you as a suitable partner. Indeed, she was so urgent that she exacted a promise that I would follow her advice. At that time I was much agitated and distressed, and scarcely knew what I was saying, but since I have recently come to reflect upon the matter it has seemed to me that her views were very judicious. The time is near when I can, without reproach, enter again into the marriage state, and for many reasons it seems expedient for me to do so. Inasmuch as you were on terms of close friendship with my dear Jane, and will doubtless desire, as I do, to carry out her wishes as far as possible in all respects, I ask your consideration of the matter in hand. As my wife you can greatly increase your field of usefulness, and I feel assured that the Lord will fit your strength to the new duties and responsibilities. I write this in order to prepare your mind. I shall return to-morrow and will call on you, when we can discuss the subject in all its bearings.

"Yours in the Lord,

"CALVIN H. EVANS."

Miss Callista read this epistle several times. At first she experienced a sense of triumph and elation. There was no longer any doubt about the matter. She, and not the Widow Jackson, had won the prize. On the second reading she added the comment, "if he is a prize." The third time red spots began to grow on her

cheeks, and she talked to herself as people who live alone are apt to do.

"He talks as if he were asking me to marry him all on his first wife's account, and had no special interest in the matter himself. Mrs. Evans was a good woman, but another woman wants some better reason for marrying the widower than that. And then he doesn't out and out ask me to marry him; jest takes it for granted that I will jump at the chance once my mind is prepared. Conceited old thing, if he is a preacher. He seems to have some doubt, too, of my being equal to the new duties, and —and he never even says he likes me or will try to make me happy, or anything. A woman, even if she is going to be a second wife and isn't as young as she was, wants a little love-making on her own account."

Miss Callista did not reflect, or perhaps did not know, that men to whom it is not given to be sentimental and affectionate on paper are sometimes most eloquent of speech in the tender cause. She continued to cherish resentment, but, nevertheless, went about preparing green corn fritters in case the parson should happen in about supper time.

The twins happened in, as they were wont to do whenever they found the gates unfastened, and after them presently came their father ostensibly in search of the truants. He had come so often on the same errand that he was quite at home, and detected at once Miss Callista's appearance of irritation, for there was a dangerous sparkle in her usually mild eyes.

"Have the children worried you? I will take them home at once," he said.

"Worry me—those dear babies? No, indeed; they couldn't do that. Older people than they are the ones who worry."

Rev. Mr. Littledale might have made a reputation in the legal profession, he had such a knack of getting the information he wanted by skillful but apparently purposeless questioning. Miss Callista had no intention of telling about Mr. Evans's proposal, or, more accurately, his proposition, but she was full of the subject, and presently sat down on the sofa in the cool little parlor, the twins promptly climbing up and sitting one on each side with their arms about her.

"What would you think, Mr. Littledale, of a man who would ask a woman to be his second wife just because he thought it would please his

first wife? I know—I know a lady—I have heard of a case of the kind."

Mr. Littledale was shrewd. He had had his eye on Mr. Evans, and needed to know no more.

"Miss Callista," said he promptly and with shameless disregard of the other man's possible claims, "Miss Callista, such a man isn't worth thinking about. He's a selfish wretch, and no woman could be happy with him. A second wife deserves as much consideration as the first, and on her own account, too. And while we are talking about marrying, Miss Callista, shall I tell you what I have been wanting to say for some time? I want you for my wife. I love you, Miss Callista; the twins love you; won't you come to us?"

The twins, cherubic creatures, promptly echoed, "Love oo, Miss C'lista," and proceeded to embrace her, but were dispossessed by their parent.

Miss Callista was taken completely by surprise, but this variety of surprise never wholly disconcerts the most timid of women. She thought rapidly for a moment.

"There! Mr. Littledale 's been dropping in all summer, staying to supper and making himself at home generally, and I never thought any-

thing of it, because he's younger than I be; and, besides, I s'posed he was engaged to that Stone girl. Folks will say I tried to catch him."

Like a flash, too, came the thought: "If I say yes, Mr. Evans will have to look somewhere else, and I don't care if he does. I never made any promise to Jane. The Widow Jackson can have him."

What Miss Callista said was: "Why, Mr. Littledale, I'm seven years older than you be, and—and I'm a Presbyterian."

"What do a few years matter? We won't count them," was the reply. "And I'm sure I have nothing against Presbyterians. If you mean that I'm a Campbellite, why, please try to forgive me."

Evidently he received forgiveness, for when Mr. Evans arrived that evening he found Mr. Littledale sitting with Miss Callista on the vine-covered porch, and the corn fritters had all been eaten. The new condition of affairs was gently disclosed to him by his successful rival, and he was perceptibly discomfited. He had, perhaps, not valued Miss Callista at her true worth while he considered her his for the asking, but now that another man had taken her from him she

suddenly seemed highly desirable. Possibly the discovery of Rev. Evans's designs may have inspired Mr. Littledale to unpremeditated action, but this is only a surmise. It is the way of man to be so influenced. Mr. Evans made but a short call, and when he entered his own home the door was heard to slam with what seemed unnecessary violence.

But the Presbyterian pastor was not inconsolable. The very next evening he walked home with the widow Jackson from prayer-meeting and stayed till 10 o'clock. The morning after, the widow, under strict injunction of secrecy, told Deacon Todd's wife of her engagement, and by night the whole town knew of it.

Miss Callista also confided in Mrs. Todd.

"I never would have supposed that I'd marry a Campbellite, that is, a Disciple—never, or that I'd be one myself. Of course, a minister's wife ought, in all decency, to belong to his church, and, of course, I will. I ought to be able to accept the doctern if it's the hull New Testament, as they say. And there! I'll have to be immersed, too, I s'pose. I hadn't thought of that; but I guess I can stand it to go through water, or fire either, for them blessed twins."

AT A WAY-STATION

THIRTY years ago a certain railroad in Indiana was new enough to be still a source of deep interest and curiosity to the people of the sparsely-settled region through which it passed. They had not yet ceased to gather at the stations, morning and evening, to see the "down train" and the "up train." The projectors of this thoroughfare, having in view, perhaps, legislative appropriations and private subscriptions of stock, had artfully led the public to think that a farming country of marvelous richness was suffering for an outlet; that passengers and produce impatiently waited to crowd its cars. So impressed were guileless citizens with this idea that only a brave man or a fool would have dared to say: "Go to! We need no railroad." Thus far in the existence of the road the great rush of travel and traffic had not begun; in the mean-

time, one train daily each way was found enough for all needs.

Few among the rural population along the route ever went from home; fewer still expected visitors. Yet they went regularly to see the engine and the gayly painted cars; they indulged in wild speculations as to the probable business and destination of the travelers of whom they caught glimpses. The occasional stranger who stopped at any village was confronted on the platform by groups of men in blue or butternut jeans, all chewing tobacco and expectorating profusely. He passed women in lank calico dresses and limp calico sunbonnets—some old and wrinkled, some young enough to be pretty, but, with rare exceptions, hopelessly plain. Even the dull-eyed babies, in their mothers' arms, lacked the charm of health and wholesomeness. If the traveler chanced to wonder how one woman, with an expanse of toothless gums, could endure to smile, he might marvel that the next one appeared in public before having her unsightly teeth removed. And while he considered the sad effect of quinine, soda and tobacco on human beauty, he would have been amazed had he known the curiosity his own person excited.

"Who is he?" "Where does he live at?" "What brings him down this away?" "How long will he stay?" were questions eagerly discussed.

The railroad had given them something to think about. Do you know what that means, you who have never lived in the country, remote from a business center? It means that the residents, having little outside interest, few books, perhaps no newspapers (there are such places yet), have narrowed their lives down until fresh subjects for thought and conversation are rare. They have talked about each other, about the crops, the calves, the pigs and the weather, until each man knows what another is going to say while he is yet afar off. Any unusual event, a death, an elopement, a fire, is seized upon, talked about from every point of view, turned to every light, over and over, until each thread and shred of the story is worn with age. Finally, it seems to die away, but suddenly revives, and passes on its round until set aside by something equally startling. Think, then, of the vast store of entertainment afforded by a railroad!

On this October evening, thirty years ago the echoing scream of the locomotive, strange to

say, did not draw out the usual number of idlers to gape, open-mouthed, as the train halted, then passed on. More strange still, many passengers alighted at each stopping place—the natives, themselves, returning home with the air of adventurers, breathing sighs of relief, too, as of having safely accomplished a perilous journey. Capacious lunch-baskets, as well as certain additions to their every-day attire—wide hoop-skirts on the women, shirt-collars on the men, for example—suggested that some sort of festivities had been indulged in.

As the excursionists lingered, reluctant to go while anything remained to be seen, their last glances turned from the long line of crowded passenger coaches to a baggage-car with the doors tightly closed, and a curious hush fell on them as it rolled by. What did it mean? A "through passenger," in search of knowledge, found the path an easy one. The long, lean man at his side, with sunburned, straggling beard and a mouth like a cavern, was full of information. "Political meetin'! Lord, no! 'Lections stirs a feller up some, but there ain't ary stump-speaker in Indiana 'at kin fetch sech an all-fired big crowd as was out to Newburg to-day. Hangin' yo'

know—Bill Murdock's. Hain't heard about him? Reckon yo' cain't live 'round hyer, anywheres, or yo'd a knowed the peticklers. Been a powerful sight o' talk about it, fust an' last. Yo' see 't happened 'bout this hyer way: Bill, he tuck a notion one night, nigh two months ago now, 'at he'd go down to the Corners to Gimble's an' get some ten-penny nails.

"He was a-workin' old Carter's farm on the sheers an' lived up there, full two mile from the Corners. His wife was a finicky little critter, with a mite of a baby, an' 'peared like she had a warnin' o' some kind, for she done her best to coax him to stay to home. But go he would, though what he wanted with them nails jest at that time, more 'an a pin with two heads, no one could ever make out. After he'd bought 'em an' talked with the fellers in the store a bit —mebbe had a drink or two in the back room —in come Jake Jillson. Jake was a airy sort o' chap—could afford to be, 'cause his father 'd left him one o' the best farms in the township, an' he was beholden to nobody. Well, there'd been some old grutch atween him an' Bill—no one knows zackly what. Some says Jake had courted Bill's wife in times past, an' that she

throwed him over; but I don't reckon that was it. Jake was married two years afore Bill was, an' taint no ways likely 'at a female woman 'u'd give a well-to-do feller like Jake the go-by an' take up with a pore man like Bill. They're too long-headed, women be. 'T any rate, however 'twas, the two soon come to a quarrel. Nobody 'at heard 'em seems to agree jest how it was. Jake he was aggravatin' an' kep' a naggin'. Bill allays was high-tempered, an' fore anyone seen 'at they was really in airnest, Bill he was chasin' of Jake over the boxes an' bar'ls. It was on'y a minute afore he ketched him an' hit him. The breath was knocked out o' Jake for good an' all with that air very pound o' ten-penny nails.

"Jerusalem! What a racket it raised! After the folks come to their senses like, they got the sheriff an' a posse o' constables an' scoured around the country right smart of a spell huntin' Bill, afore they thought o' going to his house. At last they went there an' found him a-walkin' the floor with his baby. He was teetotally wropped up in that woman an' young un o' his, but sick baby or not he was drug off to jail, an' not a minute too soon. A lot o' men in masks came a-gallopin' down, an' would a' made

short work o' him if he'd been there. No, I don't know who they were, an' ef I did, 'twould be safe fer to keep my mouth shet. These hyer things hev to be looked after now an' then—the law bein' so slow an' oncertain. Wasn't much time lost, though, on this case. The jury wouldn't a' dared to a' brought in ary other verdict than guilty, considerin' how many rich relations Jake had scattered about this county. They'd made it mighty lively for ary juryman 'at would vote to clear his murderer. An' so Bill, bein', as I said, a pore man, with no friends to help him, had no show, an' had to swing. 'Twas all right, I reckon; somebody has to be made a example of.

"Me an' Mandy—that's her in the red caliker a settin' over yonder—'lowed we'd go up to Newburg to-day, where the hangin' was at. Hadn't ary one of us ever saw a man hung, an' she hadn't never been on the steam kyars. I hadn't no notion o' takin' the boys, but Mandy, she says, 'Lawsy, let 'em go, it'll be a warnin' to 'em to behave theirselves when they've growed up.' So we all went. An' jeminey! what a crowd! Best part o' two counties there, I reckon."

After a pause, during which the long, lean man ejected tobacco juice vigorously across the traveler into the aisle, he added reflectively: "A circus, I'm free to say, would a' been more to my taste, but it wouldn't a' been so improvin' to the community. Elder Borum says circuses are corrupt an' a snare o' the devil."

Another pause and more tobacco.

"The—the—deceased is on a kyar back o' this hyer."

Just then the train quivered, slackened, stopped where a lonely country road crossed the track; not a human being, not a house in sight —only a platform and a pile of walnut lumber to hide the long, straight, western horizon beyond miles and miles of "rolling" country. In the summer, perhaps, it might have a certain beauty; in the dusk of this autumn day it was desolation. Toward the north a grove of girdled trees waved white, ghostly arms; rain had fallen and the gray earth, the heavy sky alike seemed sodden. The long gray and black curves of the wagon-track wound in and out like a huge serpent crawling over the earth.

Out upon the platform was helped from the baggage-car a young, slender woman with a

baby in her arms—a woman in whose eyes was no longer hope, were no more tears.

After her was lifted a pine coffin roughly stained. The men who had touched her gently were less tender of this other burden. They dropped it with a jar that brought a little cry of pain from the woman's lips. She sank down and placed her hand upon the box as if to shield from harm that which was within. The child upon her lap stared solemnly at the sky. The engine shrieked fiercely as if in haste to go, then rushed on, leaving her with her dead and her despair.

Curious passengers, looking back from a bend in the road, saw her crouching motionless, while a last red gleam from the setting sun broke through the clouds and touched her with a weird light.

Around a curve of serpentine highway they saw, too, a country wagon, the driver an old man with bent head, the horses slow and spiritless. Then the train swept on out of sight.

Not a pleasant story, do you say?

No, yet "'tis true, 'tis pity." It is one of those dark threads so common in the weft of life that, to our short-sighted eyes, mar the pattern

that else might be so fair. We even doubt the wisdom of the Weaver who permits such defects, such shadows to hide the clearer outlines of the web. As if we knew His designs!

Do you wish to hear the sequel—to follow to an end the twisted thread that seems to have crossed and tangled uselessly in the loom of fate?

The mother, who was left with her child at the lonely station, would have been glad to die, no doubt; but, for the sake of the babe, she must live on. She was one of those timid, clinging creatures such as all women are exhorted to become. Masculine wisdom says the manifest destiny of such a one is to be a wife and mother; the same sagacity neglects to go further and provide for her helplessness when destiny fails her. But these two lived, and the child grew and thrived. How they lived only a woman, poor and alone, who toils for her children, day and night, can tell. This mother, like the rest, worked early and late at anything her hands could find to do. She sewed, she washed, she nursed the sick, she drudged for the farmers' wives in busy seasons. Hours when she should have slept were spent

in making the scanty garments of baby Nancy. Little sympathy was manifested for her, though doubtless more was felt than found expression; the American farmer is not demonstrative. She did not ask for pity, and no one saw her weep. The neighbors said "Mrs. Murdock bore up right well under her man's takin' off; lucky 'at she was one o' them kind 'at didn't have no deep feelin's."

Not so with the other widow. Mrs. Jillson's display of grief was loud and violent. Never was woman so cruelly bereaved, she said. She knew she could not live. If there were no Murdocks on the face of the earth she should die easier; she could grind them to powder herself. "What right had that sly, deceitful hussy to be alive? Not a bit of doubt she worked Bill up to the murder. Jealous, you see, because Jake looked at her once before he knew me."

Before long, however, her excessive sorrow moderated. She allowed herself to think favorably of life once more. Hysterics and "sinking spells" grew less frequent. In less than a year she married again—entirely on her son's account, she told her friends. "A lone widow woman couldn't rightly bring up a boy."

Mrs. Murdock's feelings toward the family of her husband's victim were curious. For them she cared nothing, but for "Billy's sake" she cherished a strong desire, a feverish anxiety to do them some service. Had she been of the Roman Catholic instead of the Methodist faith she would have starved herself, if need be, to pay for masses for the repose of his soul. As it was, ministers of the gospel—well-meaning men—who had "labored and prayed" with Murdock before his execution, told her that he had refused the means of grace. While admitting regret for the crime committed, he had declared that he did not love God; that he knew nothing about Him. "When yo' talk, Elder, about lovin'," he would say, "I could sense yore meanin' mighty well ef yo' was a p'intin' at my woman an' the little chickabiddy. Them's all I've got ary love fer in this hyer world. I never knowed the Lord here, an' ef it depends upon my believin' in an' lovin' of Him now, I reckon I shan't know Him in the next place." With which grim statement the preachers were finally forced to silence.

Being taken thus in the blackness of his sins, unconverted, of course he must pay the penalty

hereafter, they told the grieving wife. The penalty, she had always been taught and had undoubtedly believed, was unspeakable torture forever and evermore.

Now, in her extremity, she did as we all do when a creed is too narrow for our own special needs—she passed it by. Turning from that monument of human wisdom, she groped for a gate where hope was not shut out.

"Billy must be punished, for he done a wicked thing, but he was not bad, he was not bad. I knowed him so well. He was always kind, on'y his temper quick—God must know that too, an' surely, surely He can't be hard on him always 'cause he lost control over his self jest once. Ef I could on'y do something for Mrs. Jillson, seems as if 'twould count for Billy some way. Ef she would let me work for her I might see some chance, but 'pears like she won't let me come a-nigh."

Having no one else, she whispered her thoughts, her wishes to the little Nancy. Instead of tender songs and baby talk, the child was lulled to sleep with stories of her father, with broken sobs and prayers. Who knows how early she became aware of a shadow upon her

life? How soon she was conscious of a difference between herself and other children whom she saw? Her presence was only tolerated by the busy farmers' wives because the mother could not leave her; no noisy play, no mischievous pranks were permitted or excused.

The children of the poor and unfortunate learn self-control and self-repression at an early age. When Nancy was ten years old she was done with childhood. She could make herself useful in many ways to the women who wanted "help." She could "earn her own living," and talk gravely of a half day's or a full day's time. Her mother, perhaps feeling that she could do no more for her daughter, and having no other interest in life, let this world slip from her feeble hold, and went out over the border into the unknown.

As she grew up, people were not often unkind to Nancy. On the contrary, they were usually friendly in a somewhat condescending way—when she did her work well. Had she been a timid, confiding creature, less self-reliant and reserved, no doubt they would have shown her many a favor that would have made her heart glad. As it was, the occasional rude taunts of

other children (what is more barbarous than a cruel child?) and now and then rough allusions to her father's death by older people, raised in her nature the armor of silence and assumed indifference. Withdrawing into herself, asking no help, she was allowed to go her way alone as best she could. So she toiled and served until she came to eighteen years of age. That time found her in the home of a farmer, twenty miles from her birthplace.

Had you asked the girl if she were happy, she might have said yes. The farmer and his wife, who had no children, were kind to her. There was plenty of hard work, to be sure, but she had known nothing else. Metaphysical questions had not troubled her; she had never asked herself if life were worth living, had accepted fate without rebellion. She had read no novels. Mr. Rhorer, the farmer, sometimes asked her to read to him from The Weekly Reaper—"types were so much littler'n they used to be, readin' kind o' made his head dizzy." Nancy certainly might absorb facts, but not romance, from the able dissertations she spelled out upon the treatment of lambs, the weevil in wheat, or the advertisements of patent

churns. Even the household department of the paper did not develop artistic tastes. She had no colored tissue papers wherewith to construct lamp-mats. Why should she make elaborate frames of walnut shells or crooked sticks, when she had no pictures to put in them?

An ignorant, uninteresting serving-maid, you see—very different from the æsthetic, cultured heroine, so popular nowadays. Yet this one was a woman, "with the heart and the hopes of a woman." Hardly conscious, perhaps, that she had a heart, so long had it been starved. As in her childish days, she still held aloof from the young people, though, had she been so disposed, more than one young granger would have been glad to become her "beau," for Nancy was fair to see. They were not so fastidious as to birth and family that her bright eyes might not have won them.

The one small interest and excitement in Nancy's life this summer was watching the evening passenger train. It stopped for a few moments at a water station not far below the house, and there she waited, when her work was done, to catch a glimpse of the wonderful outside world, that she could see in no other way. Day

after day found her there, leaning against the old gate under a wide beech tree. She liked to look at the strange faces, and took deep interest in the variety of hats and bonnets, the only articles of apparel visible from her point of view. It puzzled her to guess where so many people could always be going. If she should ever go traveling she would not look so tired and cross as many of them did; she was sure she would feel sorry, too, for girls who could only stand outside and see the cars go by. Once she saw a man carefully fasten a wrap around his wife's throat, and heard words of tender anxiety for her comfort. She wondered vaguely if any one would ever care for her in that way; it was not likely, she thought. Somehow she did not wish to stay that night until the train started. She was tired, and the hissing of the steam made her head ache.

One day she became conscious that the young man who stood smoking a cigar on the back platform was the same one who was there yesterday, perhaps the day before that. With eyes turned away she became aware, too, that he was looking at her with bold admiration—the subtle

magnetism, conveyed no scientists quite explain how, made her cheeks scarlet.

What was there in a trifle like that to make her sleep that night less dreamless than before, in spite of sound health and weary young body?

The next evening she went to the usual place. A little shyness about her now, but why should she stay away? She could not know that the young man would be there again; but he was there, and this time lifted his hat and smiled at her. If Nancy lived to be an old woman, and never saw him again, he would stay in her memory for that one act. She looked at it, not as an impertinence, but as a mark of respect. No man had ever lifted his hat to her before. The rustic beaux had not attained that touch of polish, and would have sneered had they seen him, yet have envied him his style and city manners.

The refined, accomplished lady of whom we like to read would not have been pleased with this young man. She would have seen a "person" of twenty-one or twenty-two years of age with sandy hair and a jet black moustache. A penetrating odor of hair oil and cinnamon essence diffused itself about him. Wherever jewelry is

admissible in masculine outfit he had given it room—not expensive ornaments, perhaps, but large and showy. A hat worn upon one side of his head, a cigar carried in the opposite corner of his mouth, as if to balance the organ of brains, were peculiarities of his style.

The thrill which filled poor Nancy with delight would have been a shudder of disgust to our fastidious maiden.

Poor Nancy? No. Something had entered into her days which made labor light and hours short. Only smiles and glances, but these may mean so much. Once he threw a kiss at her when no one else could see; she tried not to think of that except when by herself, for fear some one might guess her thoughts.

One day her heart was set to fluttering, and her cheeks to burning when Mr. Rohrer brought the young man—yes, there could be no mistake—the same young man home to dinner with him. His name was Valentine Gipe.

"My stepfather's name, did you say, Mrs. Rhorer? Yes, I've always went by name of Gipe instead of ——." (A door slammed and Nancy did not catch that.) "Live up at Newburg, with maw an' paw. Maw, she's that

wropped up in me she won't hardly let me out of her sight. Am in business with Uncle Joe, down to the junction, an' havin' a free pass, it's just as cheap to board at home, so I go up and down on the road every day. We're dealin' in stock right smart at present. Heard Mr. Rhorer had some fat cattle to sell, an' have took a run up to see. Betcher boots I can't be beat in jedgin' the pints of a nanimal. Uncle Joe, he knows it, too; has dead loads o' confidence in me."

It took a long time to buy those cattle. Mr. Gipe came and went, and came again. When one purchase was made another was talked of, and the summer was ended before the stock was sold.

Long before that time Nancy's heart was gone. All the love that other girls divide among friends and relatives was concentrated and lavished upon a creature who did not know what treasure was laid at his feet. He had nothing but empty words to give in return, was having a little fun, a little flirtation, he said to himself—but upon these words of love Nancy lived and was happy. The world took on a beauty she had never seen before. She won-

dered, as she sang at her work, that she had not noticed what a pretty blue was the sky, how bright were the sunsets; nothing in heaven, she thought, could be fairer than the moon-lit summer nights.

The light of her passion brightened everything. Even the gray, heavy face of her mistress was touched with a reflected glow. Hitherto the girl had felt an unconscious pity for that worthy matron's plainness. With feminine faith in beauty, she had wondered, idly, how Mr. Rhorer, himself no Adonis, could ever have married so unprepossessing a creature. Now she could see that the good woman might not have been so plain, after all, when young.

Mrs. Rohrer saw nothing of the play that went on before her face. Not a whisper of the old, old story reached her dull ears. She had forgotten that she was young once; she did not remember that the blood of youth is riotous, its pulses swift and eager—not sluggish, as her own. The girl was "only Nancy." Her mistress did not see that she was fair, did not dream that she had a want that was not supplied by herself. It never occurred to her that Valentine's frequent

visits were for any one but her husband, because she knew——.

A part of what Mrs. Rhorer knew Nancy learned one day. Summer had gone then; the first bleak weather of fall had come, and sitting by the kitchen fire, the prudent farmer's wife began planning for the winter. "I wish to goodness Dan'el an' Val Gipe would finish up their trade about that last lot o' cattle. We don't want to winter them steers over. The young feller's keen at a bargain, but powerful cautious. It's jest as well, though, I s'pose, fer him to go slow an' take care of his money, fer he'll have a heap of it some day. His Uncle Joe's an old bachelor, an' most likely 'll leave him all he's got, an' then his pap left him right smart of a lump."

"His pap dead? Why, child, didn't I ever tell ye 'at Val's pap was murdered when he was a baby? Gipe's on'y his stepfather—Jillson's rightly his name. The man was hung who did the killin'. 'Member me and Dan'el was at the hangin'.—— Why! Bless my soul! What ails the critter, a whiskin' out thataway an' slammin' of the door? Is she—why lawsy, come to think, the man who was hung was her

pap, and I clean forgot it. Mighty touchy she is, to be sure, but I wouldn't a' said anything if I'd a' thought. Was going to tell her about Val's wedding that's to come off next month. Wonder if we'll get an invite."

Nancy's mind was in a whirl. One thought only was clear. Val was coming that night. He would have "something particular" to tell her, he had said, and she, in her innocence, had blushed and thought of but one thing he could say. Now she must tell him this awful thing; of course he did not know it, and what would he say? Quite likely he could not marry her now, for his mother would never consent. But how could they live apart?

With the simplicity of a woman who loves and knows nothing of coquetry or flirtation, she had accepted Val's tender words without misgiving. That he had said nothing of marriage had not troubled her; so far the love had been all-absorbing, without thought for the morrow. She had not doubted that he knew her history—"everybody did"—and mixed with her affection was a strong feeling of gratitude that he had not held aloof. She would care for him just the same, she knew, if

all his relatives were thieves and murderers, but this was different. Her early years had left a vivid impression on her mind of the relentless hatred of Mrs. Jillson to her mother and herself. It could hardly be hoped that time had made much change. If Val should ask his mother, perhaps—it might be—

Like one dazed she went about her tasks. Would the day never end? How gray and cold it was! The morning, she remembered, had been bright and clear. After supper she was sent to the cross-roads grocery, a mile and a half away, on some household errand. It grew dark early now, but she was not afraid. What was there to fear? She must hurry, though, to be back when Val came. It was nearer to go up the railroad than around by the turnpike, so she started home that way. It was a lonely walk even in the daylight, through dense woods and through deep cuts, but she thought only of the man she was hastening to meet.

Suddenly in the darkest part of the road, where it made a short curve, she came upon an obstruction. Partly with eyes accustomed now to the darkness, partly by touch, she found logs and stones piled high across the track.

How they came there she did not stop to consider. Like a flash came the thought, "the evening express is due; it will be wrecked and Val is on it." One moment, then followed the thought and the deed for which she had lived her eighteen years. "If I can reach the water-station I can warn the engineer; there is no other way. I shall save Val yet." Softly she crept over the logs; with swift feet she sped up the gloomy road, and thought not of the darkness. Like an illumination around her was the feeling "My Val shall not die, I will save him." Swifter yet she ran—it was a mile or more. Once she fell; with her ear upon the ground she heard the vibrations of the coming train. Could she not go faster? On and on, past the woods, through the cornfields now—the stalks still standing breast-high after the western fashion. How the dry leaves rustled! Her footsteps seemed to echo. Plainly now she heard the throbbing of the engine; its fiery eye shone far up the road —there was yet time, she was nearly there. Louder sounded the thunder of the train, but above that and the beating of her heart she heard again the echoing steps. Some one followed her, called to her to halt, threatened her, but

still she ran faster, faster. A pistol shot, another, but she went on, staggering now. The train came thundering on, seeming in the gloom, like a destroying monster, stopped impatiently at the station, and Nancy dragged herself to the engineer's cab. Her work was done. The creatures who, for malice or plunder, had planned the wreck were defeated, but had wreaked vengeance on her.

On board that train were lives worth more than the one for which she had given her own—men for whom other women would have died, no doubt; wives and children for whom hearts would have broken had they come to their homes no more. She had saved these passengers from destruction, but her thoughts were only for one. "Val! my Val!" was her cry—maidenly shyness gone now in the solemn presence of death. To her it was as though they two were alone in all the world. When they carried her to the house the young man followed reluctantly.

"I did it for you, Val. I know'd you'd be on the train. Seemed as if the Lord must let me get there in time. I kep' askin' Him over an' over, an' He did. I reckon it's all up with me, though. This mornin' I'd a been sorry,

but it's just as well. You couldn't a married me, Val, a-knowin' who I be, an' it don't 'pear as if I could a-lived away from you. You're all I've got. Mother'll be glad 'at I did this. Mebbe it 'll count for father, as she always was sayin'. Mebbe yer ma 'll forgive us all now."

Valentine Jillson was selfish. Some woman had ministered to his comfort, his vanity, all his life. This one, he thought, had only done what was proper, everything considered. He was base, but with those dying eyes upon his face he did not remind Nancy that he had never spoken of marrying her. He could not tell the girl what he had come that night to say—that their acquaintance must come to an end, because he was to marry Squire Jones's daughter, Juniata, next month.

And she, even with the prescience of death, could not read his treachery. With his hand clasped tightly in her own she did not know him false.

Swiftly her life ebbed away. She grew weaker, weaker. "I am—so—tired. Kiss me —once more—Val. Say you—love me. My Val. I—love—love—. It is—dark."

With his words, his kiss (heaven would par-

don this last deceit), Nancy's eyes closed to open no more on this earth. On the other side, it may be, she took up the thread of existence that had lain in the shadow here and carried it on into the eternal brightness—the glory that is neither of sun nor of moon.

MRS. BROOKS'S CHANGE OF HEART

MRS. HANNAH BROOKS, "Aunt Hannah," as she was commonly known, had been a consistent member of the Methodist Episcopal Church from the time she was eleven years old, and she was now sixty-two. For over fifty years she had walked in the strait and narrow path and had never failed to observe the ordinances of the church, or to rebuke sin wherever she detected it. Many people, even church members, felt that Mrs. Brooks's standard of behavior was a little too exacting and severe for nineteenth century use. She was quite as austere in her views as if she had been a direct descendant of a Puritan father and had lived all her life on stony New England soil instead of having been born in Indiana of parents who had come from the "old country." The Puritan influence affects all American character

more or less, and it is a mistake to suppose that the stern and rigid code of conduct commonly ascribed to that influence is confined to one locality or is accepted only by Americans whose family trees were planted in this soil before the Revolution.

Mrs. Brooks had early been taught to believe that dancing was a device of the enemy of mankind to ensnare the souls of youth. Card playing was an abomination that none could tamper with without danger of missing heaven; while as for the theater, that was simply an open door to the place of everlasting torment. All through her life she had frequently found it necessary to warn and reprove young people of her acquaintance who showed an inclination to indulge in the two first-named frivolities, but the theater evil was one she had encountered only in recent years. Aunt Hannah had never lived in the city, her home having been first upon a farm, and, later, and for many years now, in the little town of Cicero, which has no opera house and whose dramas are not played upon the stage. With increasing frequency the rumor came to her that some young man or maiden had visited the theater in Indian-

apolis to see a performance by graceless play-actors—a "show" they called it—and if these erring young persons were in the church she invariably took pains to make a personal remonstrance and to urge them to turn again to the strait and narrow path.

Among themselves these young people, feeling a little guilty and conscience-stricken over their conduct, nevertheless, said sometimes that Aunt Hannah was hard and unsympathetic, and that she would not talk so if she were not so old-fashioned and understood how harmless theaters really were. But Mrs. Brooks was not unsympathetic. She believed firmly that all these things were wicked. She had been taught so, and had seen no reason to change her opinion. Believing thus, and being very direct, outspoken and fearless in her methods, she hesitated not to free her mind when occasion seemed to require.

She was an uncommonly intelligent and well-informed woman for one of her limited opportunities, being a close reader of such literature as came in her way—the range extending from the Bible and the life of John Wesley to Roe's novels and the weekly newspaper. But read

ing must be supplemented by experience and observation before it gives breadth of view and liberality of judgment. She realized vaguely that a change of sentiment had taken place in recent years concerning card playing, dancing and kindred amusements, but she felt that this was merely a symptom of the degeneracy of the times and was strongly to be combated. Even the ministry was being tainted with moral weakness, for had not Presiding Elder Daniels—and he one of the most influential men in the conference, too!—said to her one day when she was discoursing on this subject—had he not used these almost incendiary words:

"People must have amusements, Sister Brooks, and perhaps it is better to let them enjoy their pleasures under the sanction of the church. In old times they danced before the Lord, you know."

This was heresy that horrified the good lady, but she resolved, let come what might, that she would abate not a jot or tittle of her efforts against sin. Whatever others might do she would obey the spirit of the rules and regulations laid down in the Methodist Book of Discipline, and one of these rules charged that no entertain-

ment be entered into on which the blessing of the Lord could not be asked, or words to that effect. And to the best of her ability she did. She neglected none of the accepted means of grace. She was a regular attendant at prayer-meeting, where her voice was frequently raised in exhortation and prayer, as is the custom with devout and elderly sisters in that fold. She was faithful at class-meeting, and there confessed her shortcomings with such reservations as seemed expedient in view of the fact that the listening ears were those of a dozen or so neighbors instead of a single father confessor vowed to silence. For instance, she saw no necessity for relating in detail that she lost her temper and thought a dreadful thought, which if put in print would have contained a dash, when her clothesline broke on Monday and let her week's "wash" into the mud. All she considered essential was to acknowledge, in a general way, that she was a weak and sinful creature, and to ask the prayers of her brethren and sisters that she might overcome the old Adam and lay hold more firmly on divine grace. If any of her friends and neighbors had dared to arise in the same meeting and to speak of her as weak and

sinful it would have been a very different affair. But none of them did. They only sighed heavily, looked dismal and said "Amen!" or "Lord bless!" after the relation of each "experience."

Of late, as it happened, Mrs. Brooks's attention had been especially attracted to matters of a theatrical drift. A son living in Chicago occasionally sent her a Sunday paper, and those papers, as everybody knows, devote a considerable share of their space to the drama in its various phases. She had serious doubts as to the propriety of reading these newspapers because they were labeled "Sunday," but, reflecting that it was along in the middle of the week before they reached her, she decided, through some obscure train of logic, that there was no moral delinquency in finding out just what had been going on in the world three or four days before.

It was something of a task to read a twenty, thirty or forty-page Chicago paper through from beginning to end with the religious care that she did her county weekly, but in the two or three weeks that each copy lay around before another arrived she accomplished the task. Consequently she read a good deal about the theaters, much of it not to edification, because she

had never seen a play nor read one, and failed to comprehend many allusions. There was something about these columns that attracted her, however, and she continued to peruse them with interest. One day she found something within her comprehension. In response to popular demand, Joseph Jefferson had reproduced his "Rip Van Winkle" that season after its semi-retirement for some years, and Chicago papers had a great deal to say about it and about him—all in the way of praise. Now, Mrs. Brooks knew all about "Rip Van Winkle" and all about Jefferson. The daughter of her next-door neighbor on the east was a school-teacher in the city—said city meaning Indianapolis, of course—and subscribed for the Century Magazine, sending each copy home after she had read it. When the family was through with it it was passed around the neighborhood, beginning with Mrs. Brooks. Among other things she found in it was Jefferson's autobiography. She began reading this under the vague impression that Joseph Jefferson was a statesman of the Thomas Jefferson type; or, if not, perhaps a great writer, though she did not remember to have heard of him. At any rate, he must be

distinguished man, for only that kind wrote biographies of themselves and got them printed. When she learned that he was only an actor she felt something of a shock, but by that time she was interested in his career and pleased with the good principles he seemed to possess and the excellent moral sentiments he enunciated incidentally. It did seem strange, though, that such a man should engage in so reprehensible a calling.

When she came to the account of his appearance as Rip Van Winkle she was again surprised and pleased, for had she not read Irving's story of that good-for-nothing but winsome idler? Her next-door neighbor on the west had received a copy of the "Sketch Book" as a prize for subscribing for the Weekly Bugle, and, like most other books in the village, it had eventually gravitated into her hands.

Altogether, she was fairly well posted in regard to this particular bit of drama, and was startled one day by the discovery that she was actually wishing to see the play and to see Jefferson. The idea was really shocking. She, a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in good standing, to think of going to the theater

of all places in the world. Satan himself must have put the suggestion into her mind. Did not the church Discipline enjoin members to engage in no pastimes which could not be performed to the glory of God? Certainly no one could praise God at the theater; and yet—and yet, there was nothing especially objectionable about "Rip Van Winkle," while Mr. Jefferson seemed a good sort of man according to his light. However, perhaps the theatrical columns of the Sunday papers were just as well left alone, and she would have no more of them.

The truth was that Mrs. Brooks had, without suspecting it, a liking for the dramatic and for the spectacular. She patronized all the entertainments given under church auspices, and was pleased with them in proportion as they were picturesque or exciting. She liked elocutionary performances, and was partial to the more dramatic recitations. She never missed charades or tableaux arranged by the young people, and made no criticisms, though the representations were scenes from profane history or heathen gods and goddesses arranged in white cotton drapery, such as gods never wore before. She liked lively music—dance music, if she only knew it

—revival meetings of the stirring, fervid sort, and temperance meetings where the emotions were played upon by skillful speakers.

A week or so after this twinge of worldly temptation Mrs. Brooks went to spend a few days with her married daughter in Indianapolis to help that young matron with her winter sewing. The very evening of her arrival her son-in-law remarked to his wife at the supper table:

"Maria, Joe Jefferson is to play 'Rip Van Winkle' to-morrow night. You know we have been waiting to see him again, and I have bought tickets."

Now, Mrs. Brooks knew that since her marriage her daughter had departed from the strict ways of her youth, and now and then indulged in that perilous frivolity, progressive euchre, and attended the theater. She had made vigorous remonstrance, as in duty bound, but, finding her protests of no use, had abandoned the fight, at least till an opportune season. Out of respect to her mother's feelings, Maria tacitly ignored the subject, and now endeavored to signal her husband to silence, but he went placidly on and invited his mother-in-law to go with them, saying he would secure another seat. Much to his

surprise, and more to that of his wife, Mrs. Brooks did not manifest that animosity toward theaters which a mention of them in her presence had been wont to arouse, and which the artful son-in-law had hoped to excite on this occasion for his own delectation. On the contrary, she took up the subject with a show of interest more eager than she knew, and displayed so much familiarity with Jefferson and his play that the two younger people looked at each other in wonder. But when urged to say whether or not she would go she suddenly stiffened and responded coldly:

"George Henry, you know my principles in regard to such places. To-morrow night I shall go to hear Francis Murphy. I know the way to the hall, and am not afraid to go and come alone."

Next evening came, but Maria had a headache and could not go. George proposed to escort his mother-in-law to the Murphy meeting and leave her there while he went to the theater for an act or two—"for it was really a pity to miss it when we had the tickets and the time. You know, Mother Brooks," he said solemnly, winking at his wife over his mother-in-law's

head, "you know going to see Jefferson is not like going to see other actors. He plays such nice, clean, moral plays and is such a high-toned, moral man—church member, and all that—that it is almost as good as going to a religious meeting to hear him."

"Church member, is he?" was Mrs. Brooks's only response, but the acute George Henry detected an expression in her eye that led him to whisper to his wife, as he kissed her good-night: "If we are not home till late you may know that I have inveigled your esteemed parent into a wild orgy at the theater."

It was a fair night, and they walked down. The Grand Opera House was on the way to Tomlinson Hall, and as they drew near its portals the orchestra could be heard discoursing some very lively music preliminary to the raising of the curtain. When they reached the entrance George Henry turned toward it.

"Come, Mother Brooks, let's hear Jefferson. You may never have another chance. He beats Francis Murphy all hollow. It's all right. You'll find lots of good people there who wouldn't go to any other play nor to see any other actor for the world."

There was a faint remonstrance—where were Mrs. Brooks's accustomed vim and decision? There was a feeble holding back of her steps, but her eyes were fixed on the distant drop curtain, visible through the open doors—and in she went.

It was an event in her life. The stage with its setting, was as novel to her as to a child. There it all was, just as she had read about it, but so much more real—the village green, the old Dutch burghers, the vixenish Gretchen, little Katrina and the happy-go-lucky, lazy, but lovable Rip. As played, the story had some points she did not recall in the book, but what mattered! There was Rip doing the best he could. Suppose he was lazy and shiftless and did get tipsy sometimes, such a wife was enough to drive a man to drink. Mrs. Brooks forgot time and place in following his fortunes. She leaned forward, filled with visible wrath when Gretchen scolded, and when, at last, the wife drove him from home with his dog, and Rip turned and bade her and his child a touching farewell, tears ran down her cheeks unheeded.

Then, how she thrilled at the thunder of the mysterious ninepins rolled in the hollows of the

Catskills by Hendrick Hudson's men; how weird those old Dutchmen were; how wonderful was the red fire that flashed over them, making them look like creatures from the infernal regions! How her heart and her throat ached for the poor, pitiful old man when he woke from his twenty years' sleep and wandered back to his home to find the world changed! What a wonderful thing it was altogether that one man—for the others in the play did not matter much—that one man could make a mere story, an impossible legend, seem so true, such a thing of actual life! And what a delightful creature he was, that Rip, that Jefferson, with his airy wave of the hand and his confidential, infectious smile.

She was glad she had seen him; glad, glad.

And this statement she adhered to. George Henry was discreet enough to say very little about this escapade of his mother-in-law, but she knew that she would meet no such consideration at home, for in coming out of the opera house she had jostled against young Hiram Jones, of Cicero, whom she had often rebuked for his theater-going, and whose father was her class leader. But she was not cast down. She had no intention of concealing her act. Next

Sunday she went to church as usual, serene in the consciousness of looking well in a brand new, though properly plain, bonnet bought in the city. As usual, she appeared in class meeting when the hour came. Her keen eye detected a movement of interest and curiosity on the part of others present, which convinced her that young Hiram had told his story.

Brother Minshall, being called on after the opening prayer and hymn, arose and repeated with nasal emphasis the formula of forty years, beginning: "Brethren and sisters, I feel to rejoice that I am spared to be with you another Sunday, that I may tell you of the wondrous work of grace in my heart."

Sister Angeline Martin told her hearers in droning phrase that she was a weak and sinful worm of the dust, but that she had fixed her trust in the Lord and knew that He would lift her up.

Uncle Ezra Hinshaw was glad to add his testimony and to say that he was on the Lord's side, and had been for nigh on to forty year. An hour spent here, he said, was worth all the fleeting joys the world could give.

And so it went on until Mrs. Brooks arose. She wasted no time in preliminaries.

"I take it for granted, brethren and sisters," she said, "that you know I attended the theater when I was in the city last week, and that you want to know how I reconcile it with my professions. I did go; I got no harm, but very much enjoyment, and, I think, some good. I learned that whatever some theater plays may be, some others are as good as the best sermons. I have found out that it doesn't do to abuse all theaters because some are bad. I don't feel that I did anything wrong. I don't advise anybody else to go, and I don't advise them not. It is a matter with their own conscience. Mine is clear. I expect never to go again, but I am glad I went, and glad I learned what I learned, and glad I saw Joe Jefferson. Praise the Lord!"

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow," said the leader with solemn intonation, but with a faint twinkle in his eye. He was a discreet man, and had been to the theater in his time, too. So the class sang the doxology and was dismissed.

Going out, Aunt Hannah met young Hiram

Jones, looking a little sheepish, and shook hands with him.

"Wasn't it beautiful?" said she. "Ain't you glad you went, and ain't Joseph Jefferson great? May he live long and prosper."

AN ABIDING LOVE

THE woman who was a critical reader of magazines met her friend, the writer of stories, in the little railroad station at Mullins, in southern Indiana. The writer had just arrived from Indianapolis; the other was waiting the northbound train.

"What have you come to this dull, lonely, forlorn place for? Not for literary material, surely? My grandmother lives here, and I have known the town all my life. Nothing romantic ever happened to anyone here; there are no incidents, no tragedies, no characters worth studying; the people simply vegetate."

"I never hunt for 'material' anywhere," replied the woman who wrote. "It comes to me —crowds itself on me. I have been sent for by an invalid cousin, and expect not to think of literary matters; but if I were searching for themes I have no doubt I could find them, even here."

"I am sure you could not. What, for instance (here the speaker's voice was lowered), what could you make out of that spiritless, meek, faded-out creature there? She is a resident here; I have seen her often, but she is so colorless I never had the curiosity to ask even her name. I am sure she never had a vivid emotion, never really lived in all her life."

"Perhaps not," laughed the writer, "but I believe she has a story. I will find it out and tell it to you."

This is the story she told a month later:

Martin Davis did not look much like a man with æsthetic sentiment in his soul as he left his plow in the furrow that afternoon in early April and drove his tired horses up the lane. His face was weatherbeaten, his hands rough and hard, his clothing cheap and coarse, his high boots, into which his jeans trousers were tucked, caked with mud. But he was young and vigorous; his eyes were bright and eager, and he felt himself a man to be envied, for had he not a wife waiting for him at the house—a bride of but a few weeks? In the band of his rusty felt hat he had slipped a bunch of yellow violets.

"I knew ye liked posies, Lizzie," he said as he handed them to her at the kitchen door, "and these are the first I've seen this season, 'thout it's the little white windflowers that wilt while ye're pickin' them. These yellow things are way ahead of time. I've never found them before earlier than May; they're not common hereabouts, anyhow, but I know of a spot down in the holler where they always flourish."

When she put them in a teacup and set them on the supper table he wondered vaguely why he had never known before that flowers made a room look so cheerful—almost as if the sun were shining, though that luminary had sunk behind the western hill. He did not know that the brightness was not of the flowers, but was the light of love reflected from his heart and hers.

It was but a brief time that his happiness lasted. That was the spring of '61, and the country was even then calling upon her loyal sons. Martin Davis turned his horses into the pasture, left his crops for others to harvest and went unhesitatingly to answer the call. Oh, the heroism of the myriads who thus went out from home, and peace, and love, to the battlefield in those

dreadful years! What if they did not know that the ninety days would lengthen until no man could name the end, and that the slain would be like the leaves of the forest for numbers? What if they did go simply from a matter-of-fact sense of duty, and with little feeling of risk and danger, or because the riotous spirit of youth yearned for adventure? The fact remains—the tremendous, immutable fact—that they went by hundreds, by thousands, by tens and hundreds of thousands, and that they offered their lives. Greater love than this hath no man, and yet we, in this frivolous later day, dare sometimes speak lightly of those men and their sacrifices.

It was a monotonous and a hard life for the most part, that of a private soldier in the war for the Union. Its story has been told in fragments at home firesides and by campfires, but never in literature as a whole for the world to know. Perhaps it never will be. The veterans tell of battles and of victories and of stirring events, but they do not, as a class, care to dwell upon their hardships and sufferings. The experience cut deep, and the scars are even yet too sensitive to touch upon.

Martin Davis's life was not different from the rest. There was the drill and the camp life, the picket duty, the marching, the digging of trenches and building of breastworks, the skirmishing, the expectation of encounters with the enemy—all this for slow and weary months, and at last a great battle.

Lizzie, the young wife at home, waited from week to week and month to month, as women did in those days, with what show of patience and composure they could muster—a proof of courage and patriotism not less than that of going to war. The soldiers' story may sometimes be told, but where is the historian who shall portray the agony of the women's waiting hearts, the suffering of uncertainty and suspense? Who shall comprehend the anguish of their tears? Who understand that the strain of constant dread of evil news from husband and brother and lover was greater than that felt by the soldier before the enemy's guns—that it left unhealed scars that aged them before their time?

Lizzie Martin fared like the other women—hoping and praying, living upon the letters that came at irregular intervals, going about her tasks by day, with heavy heart, and enduring long

nights with their visions of war and woe. In the little town from which the flower of the young men had already gone, existence was not gay at the best of times, and was now more monotonous than ever to the women, whose part was to wait. There were few things to distract their minds from their own anxieties; they were not the "new" women, with many and diverse activities, and so they sat at home and thought of what might be. Mrs. Davis did not love her husband more than the other lonely women loved theirs, perhaps; but without him she was quite alone in the world, and it was natural that no event of the war was important in which he had no place. That brawny private, that long-limbed, awkward farmer boy, was all the world to her. No future opened to her vision which he did not share. She was a commonplace little creature, narrow in thought and limited in capacity, but other and greater women have found it all of life to love one man.

Letters came to her from Tennessee now. Martin wrote that it looked as if some fighting would be done very soon that would scatter the rebels and end the war. Then came the fall of Forts Henry and Donelson, and he wrote with

still greater certainty that the war was soon to close. Men better informed than he thought so then. After that there was marching across country, transportation by boat up the Tennessee, more marching, with rain and mud and cold as features of the travel—all this described in fragmentary scrawls. One of them, dated April 5th, and written on a scrap of paper while he stood in the rain with his company awaiting orders, said there would be fighting soon, and added: "Here's a yellow violet; just found it under a bank. Season's early down here. We're going to beat the rebs out of their boots. Good-bye."

This note, and then—silence. There had been a battle; it was Shiloh—bloody Shiloh. On its gory field, when the 7th of April dawned, the dead lay by thousands—the blue and the gray. Oh, Shiloh! the waiting hearts that broke when your victory was won!

Private Davis, of Company D, was numbered among the dead. A comrade wrote to Lizzie, telling her that Martin had died like a hero. A part of his regiment had faced about and retreated, broken in a panic before the Confederates' furious onslaught; but he had remained, had seized

the flag from the hand of the fleeing color-bearer and gone on triumphantly to meet the coming foe. In the thick of the fight he was seen to fall, "and," said the writer, with no art at softening cruel truth, "he was buried in a trench."

To the widow a realizing sense of the death did not come. It is often so when those away from home are taken; to their families they seem still temporarily absent and likely to return at any hour. She accepted the situation dumbly, uncomplainingly. She had no longer a keen interest in life, and was without the strength of character to rise above her grief and force herself to accept new interests. She was simply an every-day woman, who had loved her husband and continued to love and to think of him day and night, though he was dead. She sold her farm to a rich neighbor, who took advantage of her ignorance to pay her but half its value, and she was deprived of a large share of the proceeds by a sharper to whom she intrusted them for investment. Then she settled down in the little town and became a neighborhood drudge. She sewed, nursed the sick, took care of the new babies, and was at the beck and call of any

housewife who needed her in domestic emergencies.

The years went on with little variety. The war ended, and affairs settled into new grooves. A flood of prosperity swept over the country and affected even this quiet town, but made little difference in Mrs. Davis's plodding, uneventful existence. No one pitied her especially for her lonely and hard-working life. She was spoken of as "the widow Davis," but she was only one among many widows the war had created, and, as she made no ado over her woes, no one else thought to do it for her. They had their own troubles to think of. They did say, along at first, that she didn't take Mart's death very hard. She "didn't make no fuss," they said, and they "'lowed" she was "ruther shaller." Afterwards they practically forgot him, and assumed that she had done the same. But she never put off her simple mourning garb; her mouth fixed itself in a pathetic little droop; her brown hair faded early. And she would not marry again. Ten years after Shiloh, John Holt, a thrifty widower, attracted by her quiet, industrious ways, sought her as a step-mother for his children.

"No, Mr. Holt," she said. "I can't be your wife. Martin Davis is dead and buried, but I can't make him seem dead nohow; I never have, an' I don't reckon I ever can. I feel as if he was gone jest on a trip; an' I dream of him o' nights, an' I'm always glad when night comes, because them dreams come, too. I'll go along by myself till the time comes for me to go and meet Martin—but it's long, long!"

And then, her self-repression overcome by the sudden compassion in the man's eyes, she bowed her head upon the table and sobbed and wept in the utter abandonment of a grief which knows no pretense.

John Holt went away thoughtful, and was afterwards heard to say it was a "sing'lar dispensation o' Providence that took a man away from a wife like that an' let other men live whose wives wouldn't a-mourned for 'em over night if they'd drownded theirselves."

More years went, until, one day, Mrs. Davis heard of an excursion that filled her patient soul with longing. This was a trip by boat to Shiloh battleground. She had never been further from home than to Cincinnati, fifty miles

away, where she had gone once when a girl, but she determined to make this journey. It was a great undertaking, and she got ready for it with an excitement such as had not stirred her for years. She never thought of the South but as the rebels' country, and, though she knew there were no rebels now, there was down in her heart a dull hatred of all Southerners, because but for them there would have been no war—but for a certain one of them who had fired a fatal shot she would not have been left in loneliness all these long years.

Men and women of the world who, through contact with people of many localities, have gained the ability to judge their fellow-beings dispassionately find it difficult to comprehend the limitations of one who has but a single point of view. Lizzie Davis had had but one great interest in life, and had never been able to consider the outside world in any other than its relation to herself.

The trip down the Ohio river, though novel, aroused no emotion; once on the Tennessee she began to brighten. Martin had made this journey not long before his death. The war, now so far past, was brought close to her. The bat-

tle seemed but a little while back. On the wooded bluffs she could almost see rebel skirmishers in hiding. Her meek, feminine soul, which had never before directed a cruel thought toward any individual, suddenly throbbed with fierce resentment; the slow, easy-going natives, who strolled down to the landings and leisurely carried their freight up the bank in primitive fashion, seemed to her to represent a blood-thirsty, murderous people. She eyed them malevolently.

One day the captain of the boat sat down by her side on the deck. He was a middle-aged man of slow, soft speech and gentle manner—as far removed from the typical bluff, gruff, profane, aggressive river man of literature as possible. He had already won Mrs. Davis's confidence by his deferential courtesy and attentions to which she was a stranger at home. There no one was unkind, but certainly no one was noticeably considerate of the comfort of women, especially those of no particular importance. He narrated to her bits of history about the places along the river, with every foot of which he was familiar, and told anecdotes of the peo-

ple, half of whom he seemed to know by their Christian names.

"How can you speak so kindly of them, an' you a soldier, too?" she broke out at last. "Rebels I reckon they were, most of 'em, an' killed our men, an' would do it again if they had a chance."

He turned to her slowly and without a sign of surprise; she was not a new type to him.

"Madam, these people along heah were mostly Union sympathizers during the wah. I was a soldier in the Confede'at ahmy."

It was a shock. Ex-rebels had found their way to her little village since the war, but a good many sons had gone out from there to fight for the Union, and never to return, and those wanderers from the South were not made welcome, but had mostly drifted on to regions elsewhere in Indiana where were friends and sympathizers. She had never so much as talked with one before.

Then he told her, in a quiet, reminiscent way, some stories of his youth and his far Southern home; of how the South was then all the country he knew, and the North a far-off, cold region, whose people, he was taught, cared only

to buy and sell, and to subjugate and rob the South; of how the war broke out and one by one his neighbors joined the army, then his brothers, and then himself, a boy of sixteen—all filled with fierce patriotism and the blind belief that they were fighting for the right; of how his brothers had been slain, and how he had gone home, when at last the conflict was over, to find that home dismantled, the mother who had been its center forever gone, and he, yet a boy in years, lonely, disheartened and forlorn.

It was a revelation to the woman of few ideas that rebels—rebels!—were creatures with loves and sorrows like her own.

And they went on up the shining river, and a little of the peace and beauty of it entered into her soul. It was May, and the fields and forests were in freshest array. The gray-green willows, the rank water maples and the glossy oaks that crowded the river bank were fringed with undergrowth, and their trunks lost in a tangle of honey-suckles, grape-vines and ivy. It was primitive wilderness, such as the Indian must have looked at in his day.

Then came Fort Henry. The boat, which stopped accommodatingly wherever a would-be

traveler waived a handkerchief, obligingly made fast while passengers climbed the hill and wandered over the old earthworks that made the walls of that famous fort. In the glamour of the moonlight and the softness of the shadows could almost be seen the soldiers who had once crowded the place—but trees had grown up within the walls since that day, and the soldiers —where were they?

Then Pittsburg Landing and Shiloh, and the woman from the little Indiana town had reached her Mecca.

They wandered over the battlefield, those tourists; they saw it almost as it looked on the fatal Sunday so long ago, only to-day the sun shone, and then the very heavens had wept at the sight below. They saw the place where the fight was fiercest and most furious—the "Hornet's Nest," where Union men and Confederates met hand to hand and the slaughter was so great that the dead lay in heaps. They saw the pool whose margin had been red with the blood of wounded men who had dragged themselves there to quench their raging thirst. To-day cattle drank from it undisturbed.

There were houses here and there—primitive

structures, hardly more than cabins. Mrs. Davis stopped at the door of one to ask for water. An old woman came out, a woman with a scant calico gown and clumsy shoes, and eyes blurred perhaps with age, possibly with tears, but kindly still. She grew garrulous in response to a timid question.

"Yes, she had lived hereabouts evah since befo' the wah. She an' her ole man was Union, but their six boys couldn't no ways agree, an' three j'ined the Union ahmy an' three the Confede'at. An', yes—yes, it's all done ended long ago, but some days the time seems yistiddy, an' it all comes back. Her ole man couldn't keep out no ways when the boys was gone, an' he jined, too, when General Sherman come along. An'—yes, the boys was all killed; three at Donelson, two here at Shiloh Church, an' one at Chattanooga. Their pap didn't live long after; sort o' broke down like. An' if it wasn't that the boys who died here were buried in a Confede'at trench (did the visitor see the ridge over thataway?) she reckoned she'd disremembah which was Union an' which wasn't. Such things didn't seem to make no difference, nohow, when they alls was gone to rest twel jedgment day."

The woman who had lost one and the woman who had lost seven looked in each other's eyes and knew the kinship of grief, and somehow the visitor from the North felt no longer a personal resentment for her loss. Though it might have been a son of this woman who shot her Martin, he had thought he was right and meant no evil.

Then she entered the gates of the National Cemetery, where the Union dead are laid in long lines, with a granite block marking each resting place. The captain of the boat joined her at the gate, and as he passed in he plucked a sprig of cedar. The sun shining through the branches of the great forest trees flecked the grass upon the graves; a soft May breeze scattered the leaves of the early blooming roses. Down between the rows of stones they walked, and the captain, pausing at one bearing the number 1607, lifted his hat reverently and laid the bit of cedar upon it.

"I put a little posy there every time I come," he said gently; "I reckoned that may be the wife or mother of the boy lying there might like it."

The man lying there might be her Martin,

thought the little widow, and from that momen her heart ceased to cherish animosity toward an man who had fought on the other side.

She stood on the bluff and looked down o the sparkling, glinting river. The panorama o water and sky and hill stretching for miles be fore her was a vision fair to see. The flag o her country floated from the great staff above the only sound was the singing of the birds, an the peace of God was over all.

More years went by, and the Widow Davi plodded patiently through them, getting a littl more weary as they passed and finding the bur den of loneliness none the easier to bear as ag crept on. That visit to Shiloh had taught he some things, toleration among the rest, but i had also taken away one thing that had been a secret source of comfort to her. Until that tim she had pictured to herself the return of he husband. She was a woman with but scan imaginative power, but where even the dulles mind dwells much upon one subject it weave about it a network of fancy far different fro reality. She had not seen her husband dead a battle was a vague thing to her; he had sim

ply gone away and had not come back. Perhaps he had been wounded, had lost a leg or an arm, and a prisoner in rebel hands was long in recovering. Then, perhaps — here her fancy took a wild leap—perhaps he was told by some one that she was dead, or that she, thinking him dead, had married again, though she didn't quite see how he could believe she could marry another man. But such things had happened—she had read of them; and supposing he had believed it, he would wander away and never care to revisit his old home until, at last, he somehow learned the truth and hastened to her with joy. Or it might be that he had escaped from his rebel prison, had reached the sea-coast, had crept on board some foreign vessel, and had been carried to far-off lands, whence he would some day return.

Vain imaginings, but lonely women dream strange things while they go half mechanically about their monotonous daily tasks. Even the happiness of happy women is half in this unreal inner life. After this visit to Shiloh these comforting pictures were conjured up no more in Lizzie's mind. It was all real now, the battle and the slaughter, and she had seen the graves

where the soldiers lay; her thoughts centered about "1607," where the captain's tribute rested, and she felt more and more convinced that Martin slept beneath that stone. It was nearly thirty years, a lifetime, since he went, and he would come to her now only after heaven's gate had opened to let her in. She had mourned her lost love for thirty years. She, a little, commonplace woman of whom no one would have thought as a heroine of romance. She would not have known what the term "grand passion" meant; she had been simply faithful to a memory in a quiet, undemonstrative way; her life had been bound up in a sentiment, that was all.

One day in April—it was the 30th Shiloh anniversary—she was at her little cottage, no neighbor needing her services as nurse or seamstress. It had been an early spring, and she went out in the garden to look at the signs of life among her few cherished flowers. In a sunny corner wild violets grew and had pushed green leaves above the mold, but no buds were yet in sight.

"I remember," she said, speaking to a neigh-

bor who had paused in passing, "I remember seeing violet flowers as early as this."

She was thinking of those stuck in the band of Martin's hat that day so long ago when he came from the field, and as she spoke she looked down the village street, wondering at the unusual boisterousness of the school children. They followed after and jeered at a man who came slowly and hesitatingly along, as if uncertain of his way. His clothing was rough, his shoulders bent and his gait shambling. On his head was a military cap, such as some old soldiers still insist upon wearing, and on its side was something like a decoration on a woman's bonnet. It was this that made the children jeer. Mrs. Davis put her hand over her eyes and looked at it intently. Hardly knowing what she did, she went out upon the walk and down the street to meet him. When she came closer she saw that the decoration was a bunch of yellow violets. She stopped before the man and looked at him. She had never thought of her husband as other than erect, and strong, and young; this man was feeble, and dim-eyed, and old, but—she knew him.

"Martin!" she said; "Martin!" and reached

out her hands, forgetful of watching neighbors and wondering children.

Something like a miracle happened in that moment. The years fell away from her as a garment; the flush in her cheek, the love light in her eyes transfigured her.

"Lizzie!" said the man, the dull, dazed expression clearing from his face. "Lizzie," and he fumbled at his cap, "I—I thought ye'd like some posies, and came round by the holler and got them."

She took him by the hand and led him into the house, her face still illumined.

The woman who wrote stories and the others who read them met again on the street of Mullins. Toward them came Lizzie Davis. She was the woman who had been at the station weeks before, but she was like one born again. Her hair was faded, it is true; her complexion gray, her dress old-fashioned and rusty, but her eyes were bright, her bearing erect and proud, her face smiling. She stopped a moment to speak to the woman who wrote.

"Just think, Miss," she said; "Martin lives over in Jonesboro, just beyond the Ohio line

and not fifty miles from here, for twenty years. I've just seen a man from there. Where he had been before that time the Lord knows. The man says that they all knowed something was the matter with his head. Seemed to do his work well on the farm, but every now an' then he'd get uneasy an' talk an' talk about some place he'd ought to go if he could only just think of the name; an' when he heard any one call 'Lizzie' he always got worried and fidgety. Come spring, too, every year, he'd pick flowers an' wear 'em in his hat. Then at last one day his recollection seemed to come to him sudden, and he up an' started off, the man said, acting like a crazy lunatic. He found his way here, an' he's getting to be more like himself every day, an' it almost seems as if he'd never been away."

A glow was on her cheek like the blush of a bride; the thirty years of loneliness were as naught; the children that might have been hers, the happiness and peace she had missed were forgotten. The mother heart in her went out to the broken-down man and was satisfied. He came shuffling down the walk.

"See how well he looks," she said, as she

hastened toward him, with a face through which love shone as it must shine on the faces of the angels in heaven.

"You were wrong, you see," softly said the woman who wrote, to her friend; "you were wrong when you declared there was no romance here; that the people merely vegetated. That woman has lived."

"Yes," said the other, "she has loved."

A FARMHOUSE DRAMA

"IT WAS an exceptional case, that of the Marshalls, Brother Johnson, or I never should have advised them to the course they took."

The speaker, familiarly known as Father Allen to all the region round about, was a minister of the Methodist denomination, who, after an itinerant life of forty years, had, as his professional brethren put it, "assumed the superannuated relation." This being interpreted, meant that he had retired from regular duty and occupied himself, as age and strength would permit, in rendering such service to neighboring members of his old flock as occasion called for. An old minister comes to be identified with a family as no newcomer can. He has comforted its members in their sorrows and participated in their pleasures; he has been with them at their funerals and their marriage feasts, and in the emergencies of life they turn to him.

To-day, Father Allen had accompanied the Reverend Mr. Johnson, the young preacher lately stationed at Amber Center, the little Indiana town whose roofs were visible far across the prairie, on his first round of pastoral calls. They had just taken their departure from the white farmhouse of the Marshalls, bearing with them the look of ineffable content that comes to mankind only after the consumption of a bountiful meal, and were discussing the affairs of their entertainers, as is the ancient custom of guests of all degree, regardless of canons of etiquette.

Acting on the principle that a pastor should be thoroughly acquainted with the history of his flock in order to meet its spiritual needs, as a physician is better fitted to prescribe for a patient's ills when he understands his physical constitution, the old minister gave, with somewhat garrulous, not to say gossipy, detail, particulars of each individual's life to the new shepherd.

"Yes, it was an exceptional case. It is hardly necessary to say, I hope, Brother Johnson, that I am opposed to divorce. The ease with which legal separations are to be had is one of the

greatest evils of our time; I need not enlarge on that. Still—Brother Johnson, one must use judgment, and it is difficult to make an iron-clad rule for all cases. 'A rule already made,' do you say? Well, yes, yes—of course. As a general thing it is best to abide by the literal scriptural injunction, and I am the last person to countenance any other course. Nevertheless, my son, you will find, as your experience with the realities of the world broadens, that it is sometimes inexpedient to insist upon too rigid an application of the letter of the law.

"Now, in the case of the Marshalls, John was very deeply attached to his first wife, whom he married on the day of his enlistment in the army, twenty years ago; very deeply attached, no doubt of it. His wife, pretty Rose Lytle, was fond of him in her way, too, but she was of a clinging, dependent nature, and would, perhaps, have been equally happy had it chanced to be another than John, who had so devoted himself to her. The woman who loved him most deeply on the day of his marriage was Rose's cousin and adopted sister, Mary; but that was her secret. Many a woman has such. Rose was a pretty creature. It was twenty

years ago, but I remember her well. She reminded me—my wife's name was Rose, too."

The old man's voice faltered. It was not upon the prospect near that his dim eyes were wistfully fixed, but upon something far beyond. Before them the western sky was gorgeous with crimson and purple and gold—fit reminder of the gates of the New Jerusalem—but Mr. Johnson removed his gaze from the glory of the sunset to glance curiously at his aged companion, knowing as he did, that the name of the present Mrs. Allen was Sarah, and that the neatly framed portrait of her immediate predecessor was carefully labeled, "My beloved consort, Matilda."

"A week later," resumed the elder gentleman, "John was on his way with his regiment to the South, and the women were left to each other's company. The months following went by slowly enough, no doubt, to the girl in the lonely prairie home and to the man toiling in Virginia trenches, or marching over sodden hills; time moves slowly, you know, when one is young and impatient."

"When the 'body is in Segovia' and the 'soul is in Madrid,' " softly interpolated the lis-

tener, who was yet young enough to permit sentiment to come to the surface now and then.

"But time goes for all," continued the old minister, "and before the year's close it had ended to the consciousness of one of the pair. A report that John had been killed in battle came suddenly to the ears of the waiting wife—a false report, as later appeared, like so many that came from 'the front' in those days. Next day their son was born, but the mother had no smile at the sight of the baby face. The shock of the news had deprived her of reason. Physical strength came back in time, but with its return the insanity increased until she raved with madness and became dangerously violent. The husband, who had been wounded only, came home on furlough, but his presence excited her to fierce outbursts.

"It was a long time before John or the cousin Mary, patiently devoted to mother and child, would consent to send the cherished and petted girl away from their own care to an institution for the insane; but finally the safety of all demanded it. She was taken to an asylum and is there to-day.

"John rejoined his regiment, and when the

war was over came back to find his home and child well cared for by the faithful Mary. Matters went on in this way for a while, with the addition of himself as head of the household. Left to himself, he would perhaps have discovered no reason why the agreeable conditions should not continue, but when Mary, the center of this home life, suddenly resumed her old occupation of teaching, and would give no explanation of her course to the bewildered man save that she preferred the change, there were neighbors willing to enlighten him. In the matter of social conventionalities and proprieties people in country communities are very exacting, Brother Johnson, and it was not considered proper that Mary should remain as housekeeper for a man who was her brother-in-law only by courtesy.

"Naturally, this was the beginning of the end. They soon discovered each other's sentiments and came to me for advice, separately and together. The physicians had assured them that Rose was hopelessly insane; that while no one could say with absolute certainty that she would not recover, the tendencies in her case gave no encouragement for such hope. Insanity was not specified as legal cause for di-

vorce, but in those days, Indiana courts were allowed by the statutes far greater liberty and discretion than now, and, under the circumstances, there was no difficulty in the way of securing a decree of separation. The only question with these two, Mary and John, was whether it was right for John to be divorced even with conditions as they were. They were conscientious and argued for and against themselves."

"To me it seemed one of the exceptional cases. Marshall needed some one at the head of his establishment; he had not so warm an affection for this woman, perhaps, as for Rose, but he would make her a good husband. Mary cared for him as she never could for another. It is best for women to marry. It seemed to me expedient that these two should be united, and so I advised the divorce. I am still of the opinion that the course was wise."

"Mrs. Marshall's expression did not strike me as that of a particularly happy woman," said Mr. Johnson. "She looked sad, I thought, and anxious."

"Women, as a class, are foolish," hastily exclaimed the old man. "The best of them have

imaginary troubles. Mrs. Marshall allows herself to be tormented by the fear that Rose will yet be cured, and reproaches herself at the same time for dreading what ought, under other circumstances, to be a blessing. However, as I said, women will find something to worry over, and if it were not for this fanciful notion, Mrs. Marshall, good, sensible woman that she is, would have some other. I believe she did well."

As they drove up the village street in the haze of the late Indian summer twilight the young minister breathed a sigh. He had been impressed by what the poet calls the large, sweet calmness of the prairie; but peace, after all, did not, it seemed, abide with the people. He wondered what would be the end if, at last, the innocent, but cast-off wife should be restored to the realities of life.

Back in the white house on the prairie the first chapter of the sequel to the old minister's story had even then begun.

After the visitors had driven away, John Marshall and his wife stood on the steps, his eyes fixed absently on the purple line of the hor-

izon far across the level plain, she, with her face turned toward his. A question was on her lips, but she did not speak, only touched his arm softly while the look of vague apprehension in her eyes deepened into what was almost terror. At last he moved until his glance met hers.

"What you have always dreaded has happened," he said. "Rose has recovered her mind."

The woman at his side did not cry out nor moan—she was not of the demonstrative sort; but a change come over her while she stood there as if she had suddenly grown old and feeble. Her face looked pinched and gray. She took her hand from his arm and moved back a pace—a movement that told its own story. After a moment he went on steadily:

"The doctor writes that it is a very unexpected recovery; quite remarkable in the history of such cases. She is well as ever, mentally, but oddly enough her bodily strength has as suddenly failed, and, according to what he says, she is not likely to be better. It is not probable at the best that she will live many months—perhaps not even weeks; but in order to pro-

long her life, as well as to retain her mental bal
ance, she must be carefully guarded from
shock of any sort. This, above all things, must b
the care of those about her, he says, and ex
plains that he has said nothing to her concern
ing our family affairs. And," after a pause i
which he glanced uneasily at his wife, "Ros
wants to come home."

She looked at him with calm, tearless eyes.

"Do you wish her to come?" she asked.

"Well," he answered, hesitatingly, "it's
queer fix. We're all she's got, you know, yo
and I, and to send her among strangers now—i
doesn't seem just right. She was our little Rose
you remember, and ——. If she were well i
would be different, of course. Still, if you thin
it won't do—if you can't have it so, let it be a
you please, Mary."

"I only wanted to know what you wished
Do you think I would say to you, I who too
her place, that our doors must be shut agains
her? We will go to-morrow and bring her home
and I will do what I can to make her last day
happy."

John Marshall breathed a sigh of relief as if

weight were lifted from his mind. He looked at his wife approvingly.

"You are a good woman, Mary," he said.

Many a man addressing such words to his wife would have followed them with a caress, but John Marshall turned away and went about his evening tasks while Mary passed slowly and wearily into the house. A coat belonging to her husband hung in the hall. She caught the sleeve in her hand and kissed it. A girl or a gay young matron might have been thus childishly demonstrative without suspicion of any deeper feeling than an impulsive outburst of affection toward the owner of the garment. Discerning eyes like those of Father Allen, grown keen with a half century's study of human weaknesses, would have seen in the act of this middle-aged woman the betrayal of a heart's hunger.

Mechanically she went about her household duties and preparations for the guest, the dread of whose possible coming had hung over her like a shadow for fifteen years. No detail was overlooked in arranging for the comfort of "John's wife," as Mary caught herself calling in her thoughts the woman who had dropped

out of conscious existence so long ago. She had come back to life as from the dead. If a wrong had been done to her in her helpless state those who had committed it must, as they hoped for mercy hereafter, do what they could to save her from its consequences; there was no other way. They, the wrong-doers, she and John, must suffer in the performance of their duty; but they had no right to complain. It was Rose, little Rose, whom they had loved and who had trusted them so completely, who was coming back, and she must find the doors open.

Like a dream that day and the next seemed to her afterwards. The journey to the city, the meeting with the one so miraculously restored to them, the return home, were events that fixed themselves but dimly on her memory. The central fact that the companion of her girlhood, the wife of John's youth, was with them again absorbed her faculties to the exclusion of lesser matters. It was not until Rose was installed in the sunny upper room and the domestic routine had adjusted itself to the change in affairs that the second wife realized the nature of the task she had

set herself to do—that had been imposed upon her she whispered in bitter protest sometimes.

Her married life had been haunted by the fear that Rose might regain her reason, but the picture formed in her fancy had been of a wan and haggard creature heaping reproaches on the husband who had been unfaithful in her absence, and on the woman who had promised a dying father to care for her and had then usurped her place. Never had she, in her wildest dreams, contemplated anything like the reality which she now faced.

It was no pallid, wild-eyed woman who sat in the upper chamber, but a smiling guest whose every wish was honored. Strangely enough, the change that had been wrought in Rose's mental condition had its counterpart in a physical transformation. The deathly paleness, the hollow cheek, the look of age which had characterized the insane woman had given way to a color rivaling the peachy bloom of twenty years before; the blue eyes, dull for so long, shone with all their old vivid brilliancy beneath the long lashes; the face was rounded out, and its youthful outlines were emphasized by the babyish rings of fair hair that lay about the white

forehead. The weakness and languor that accompanied this change and did not pass away only added to her attractiveness. As she leaned back upon the cushions of the chair that she seldom left it was difficult to believe that the face was that of one who had lived past her girlhood. To the lookers-on it seemed that nature had endeavored to compensate for the lost years by a veritable renewal of youth and beauty.

It was not the difficult task that had been feared to guard her against injurious shocks. She quietly assumed, without question, that the relations of her loved ones were as they had been of old; indeed she seemed not to realize the time that had passed since she left them. John was her husband; Mary, the dear sister who had kept his house and awaited her recovery and return. Rose asked for her son but showed little emotion when told with hesitant caution—this was one of the things that could not be concealed or denied—that he had been a feeble child who, after five years of baby life, had left them and gone to heaven. The infant had not formed a part of the life she remembered, and knowledge of his death did not move her deeply. In telling the story of the little one whom she had loved

like her own, Mary thought, with almost a guilty feeling, of the sturdy boy who called her mother and whose existence must be so carefully hidden. The presence of a boy in the house might be easily enough accounted for, but he must not come where "Aunt Rose" was lest she ask fatal questions.

"It is enough that you and I must deceive her, but my boy shall not be taught to lie or to deny his birthright," said Mary, with fierce decision, and John had agreed.

A negro and his wife who had followed John from "ole Kaintuck" to find a home in the North, and who had been faithful servants ever since, formed the rest of the household. Visitors were few. A prairie road after November rains is not a thoroughfare sought by any except those on journeys of necessity. The few old friends or curious neighbors drawn thither by the news of Rose's return were quietly cautioned not to touch on personal matters in their conversation with the invalid. This caution and the chance allusions Rose made to her "husband" led the visitors, ignorant of the kindly deceit being practiced upon her, and doubtful, as the most intelligent people often are, of the

entire recovery of those once insane, to believe that her mind was not yet sound. So it came about that the little drama being enacted in that prairie farm-house had few spectators.

Rose expressed little curiosity concerning events that had happened during her absence and showed no interest in affairs outside their own little circle. She was content to live like a child, taking up life where she had left it, and thinking nothing of the morrow. One thing only she demanded as her right, and that the hardest of all for one member of the household to grant. "Her John's" society she claimed in all of his leisure moments, and as a farmer in the position of this man is an independent being who orders his own goings-in and comings-out the result was that John, "my dear John," as Rose called him, was at her side many hours in the day. Mary might be there, too; Rose wanted Mary also at hand, or within call, but without John she fretted and was restless.

At first Mary quieted her misgivings with a sense of shame at their existence. John, she said, was, like herself, trying to do his duty. She could serve the invalid in other ways; he could only bear her company. But the day

went on, and that upper room became a place of torture for the lawful wife so steadfastly doing that which seemed best.

John was good; he was a good man, she said over and over. Not to himself would the loyal soul willingly utter a complaint of the one she loved, but at last she could no longer close her eyes to the truth. In an agony which could find no expression, Mary acknowledged to herself that her husband sought the presence of that transfigured woman who had been the bride of his youth, because in that presence he found pleasure and delight. All through the fifteen years of her life with him she had been conscious of a lack of responsiveness to the cravings of her affection; but she had stilled the aching of her heart with the thought, not that he mourned the loss of Rose, but that a sentiment of self-reproach for having set her aside in her misfortune had raised a barrier in his nature between himself and the companion in the wrong which he could not overcome. And now she knew that this coldness was because he loved this other as he had not loved her.

During those long years she had never been quite happy because of the invisible barrier;

sometimes she had fancied herself wretched Looking back to that time now, she felt, in th sharpness of her suffering, that she had lived i paradise. Then, it was a vague, unsubstanti thing that held them apart; now, it was a beau tiful woman who thought herself his wife.

That room had a fascination for Mrs. Ma shall; she suffered when there, but after leavin it she hastened back. Neither occupant seeme to mind her presence. Rose did not;—con scious of no wrong, why should she? John di not, being apparently unaware, as he sat nea and often with Rose's pretty hand in his, tha he was exceeding the part of a courteous hos

One day, to Mary, going quietly about som task in an outer room, floated a voice in soft re proach:

"John, do you love me?"

"Why Rose, my dear Rose, don't you kno we all love you?"

" 'We!' I am not talking of 'we,' but o you. Do you know, John, that you have neve kissed me since the day I came home? Is tha the way a man behaves who loves his wife?"

And Mary, her heart faint with pain an shame and outraged love, saw the man succum

to the pleading eyes and outstretched arms. A kiss like that, she knew, had never been given her. Alive with the quick instinct to possess her own she started forward, but in a moment turned and crept away like a wounded creature, even then excusing the one who had pierced her soul.

"Could any man do differently? Only a saint could resist that loveliness for the sake of a woman such as I, worn with care and on-coming years."

She could not breathe under that roof. Out into the chill November day she hastened, not caring whither. Heavy gusts of rain swept across the sky, shrouding the prairie in a gray mist through which the scattered trees loomed dimly, their bare boughs tossing like the spars of a ship in a laboring sea. Conscious of little but her own thoughts, she hurried on until her footsteps were checked by the surprised voice of Father Allen hastening from the performance of some errand of mercy to gain shelter from the wintry storm.

"Are you crazy, daughter?"

"It would be better if I were; it would save trouble. If John could have left me at the

asylum when he brought Rose away how much better it would have been. But this life is killing me—I shall die, I shall die and be out of their way. Rose will get well—do you hear me, Father Allen? When I married John I prayed that Rose, my little cousin Rose, might never recover her mind. I founded my happiness on her misfortune. Now, I can see no happiness while we both live. I am like a murderer, Father Allen! But my punishment has come. The Lord does not wait until the hereafter."

The burst of passion ended in tears and sobs and the old man, dismounting from his horse led her unresistingly home and delivered her into the hands of the faithful black 'Liza, whose ire had long since been excited by what she described to her spouse, Tom, as the "scan'lous goings on ob dat crazy woman with Mistah John."

"I will remonstrate with Brother Marshall," thought the ministerial visitor. "It is a peculiar case, and he means no harm, I am sure; but really, it is a very trying position for Sister Marshall, and he should be more considerate."

Mr. Allen was old; the woes of women di

not impress him as they might have done a younger man, or as they would have impressed him even now, perhaps, had not the many sorrowful tales poured into his ears during the forty years of his ministry somewhat dulled his sensibilities. So it happened that he was not stern and severe in his remonstrance with Mr. Marshall when he drew him aside that night after supper, at which Mary presided, pale but self-possessed once more.

"If Mary wishes to tell Rose the truth and kill her, she may do so, or you may do it; I will not," said John. "While she is here I shall treat her kindly, whatever others may do. Come up and see her."

The old minister followed his host. In that radiant presence he, too, forgot the aching heart below and thought only of Rose and the wife of his youth whose likeness he fancied he saw in the face before him.

That night Rose moaned in her sleep, and Mary, rising from her couch near by, found the white hands clasped over the heart and wondered if the pangs of actual disease could equal her own pain.

Next day the wild storm continued and the

minister, who had remained over night, prolonged his stay. Mary wandered restlessly over the house, now in the kitchen with 'Liza, now talking lightly with Father Allen in the pleasant parlor, but never long absent from the spot up-stairs where all interest centered.

"You look pale—are you not well?" said Rose once. "John, you must not let Mary work too hard for me. Dear Mary! How should we do without her?"

Mary's answer was short and brusque as she hurried away, thinking bitterly that John had no thought to spare for any illness of hers. Repenting, presently, of her ungracious response to a kind inquiry, and returning, she saw repeated the loving scene of the day before. John was on his knees by Rose's side, her arms about his neck.

"I dreamed of our baby last night, John. When I am well—I think I shall be well soon—I want you to take me down to see where you have laid him. If I should die I want my—there, there—hush! I know you love me; I know you do, and I won't talk again of leaving you. Poor John; he has had no one to pet and care for him, and he wants his little Rose."

Half an hour later 'Liza, intent on some household service, found Mrs. Marshall lying prostrate on the floor of an unused room. She was not unconscious—women out of books do not faint when their hearts break—but nature had reached a limit, and after the storm of tears and strong crying had come a dullness of feeling that was almost insensibility.

'Liza stooped to raise her, but suddenly changed her plan. "This is Mistah John's business, an' I'll be boun' he 'tends to it."

No delicately conscientious scruples troubled her mind.

"Mistah John's a mighty good man; nevah had nothin' to say 'gainst him befo', but it do look mighty cur'ous to see him hangin' roun' a crazy woman that he divorced hisself from, an' thinkin' no mo' o' this hyer po' lamb than if the ole elder hadn't done married 'em fas' an' tight. 'Taint gwine on no mo', nohow, if this chile kin stop it. Bettah be the crazy woman than Mis' Mary if somebody gwine die fo' it."

And 'Liza, muttering ominously, marched to the front room. There even she paused.

"Ole 'Liza's a mighty mean niggah when the blessed Lawd's grace done loose its hold on her,

but the devil aint nevah gwine make her huht Mis' Rose, who looks like a angel o' the 'poca-lypse, crazy or no crazy."

And so, very quietly, she called Mr. Marshall out of the charmed presence. Father Allen, on his way upstairs, was summoned also. Once in that distant room over the half conscious "Mis' Mary," 'Liza's wrath broke forth.

"Ole 'Liza's done thought a heap o' you, Mistah John. I nevah reckoned I'us trailin' out o' ole Kaintuck aftah a man who was gwine have two wives undah one roof. Is yo' that stone bline an' onfeelin', Mistah John, that yo' aint see this blessed lamb dyin' foh the love o' yo' on 'count o' the way yo' carryin' on? What yo' reckon the Lawd thinkin' o' class-leadah Mahshall 'bout now?"

She was on the floor holding Mary's head on her ample bosom, loosening her dress, chafing her hands.

"Yo' an' Eldah Allen, hyer, yo' alls think its Mis' Mary's duty to make it easy foh you uns, an' aint a carin' if she done make a bu'n offering o' herself. Yo' alls may be mighty good in yo' minds, but yo' ain' got no kind o feelin's. Ary man what wants his wife to stan

back an' be sweet an' purty wiles he honeys up to a nurrer woman is boun' to get all broke up in he cackleations. No woman, black or white, ain' made thataway. Ole Mis' Duncan, down in Kaintuck, used to 'low, ' 'Liza,' she 'low, 'ebery male man that was evah bohned would be a Mohmon or a heathen Tuhk if he wasn't 'shamed to have folks know it.' Ole Mis' hadn't had good luck with her husban's an' was down on the sect pow'ful ha'd, but the longah I live the mo' I's 'pressed with the 'pinion that a man what wants to get into the heabenly kingdom's got to live mighty close in this worl', mighty close.''

John made no attempt to check this impetuous tirade, but during its progress his eyes had become wide open to the situation. His cheeks burned with shame. He took Mary from Liza's arms and laid her upon a bed. The sound of his voice brought her to herself. Half dazed she struggled to her feet.

''Father Allen,'' said the man, ''We,—I have made a mistake. One wrong can not be set right by another. Mary, here, is my wife. We will have done with this deception, and will

go and tell Rose, let the consequences be what they may."

Supporting his wife, he moved toward the room across the house, followed by the old minister, with 'Liza, alarmed now at the result of her temerity, bringing up the rear. Even at that moment, Mary, beginning to recover herself, forgot her own grief and pleaded brokenly for delay. Strong as had been John Marshall's resolution of a moment before, his steps faltered as they approached the door. A moment more and all paused involuntarily—arrested by the words they heard and the sight before them.

Standing by Rose's side was Mary's son, the lad of twelve. Coming into the house he had heard the sharp alarm of Aunt Rose's bell and, finding no one to answer the call, had gone up and peeped bashfully in.

Rose, gasping for breath in sudden faintness, motioned for water and air. She revived presently, the boy watching her, meanwhile, with wondering eyes.

"I have heard you about the house," she said faintly but with a smile; "why have you never been to see me before?"

"I wanted to come, but they said you must not be worried," stammered the lad.

"'They'? Who are 'they'?

"Why, father and mother," he answered in surprise.

"Well, your father and mother, whoever they may be, should have known that boys would not trouble me; I like them. And what is your name, child?"

The group at the door heard this and the boy's quick answer:

"My name is Richard—Dick, for short—Richard Marshall, you know."

Mary staggered forward as if to stop the words on the boy's lips.

"Save her, Lord!" she whispered.

Father Allen held her arm. "Hush! it is too late. It is the will of God."

John stood as one paralyzed.

"Richard Marshall," she repeated wonderingly—"the same name. And are you related to Mr. John Marshall? He did not tell me—"

"Why, Mr. John Marshall is my father, didn't you know? You must have forgotten, Aunt Rose. And, of course, Mrs. Mary Marshall is my mother."

The revelation which they had so guarded

against had been made; the shock so dreaded had been given.

Rose seemed to realize the truth slowly. Her startled eyes fell upon the terror-stricken group at the doorway. Gradually, as comprehension of the situation dawned upon her, a change came over the sweet face. It grew gray and sharp; the brightness vanished. She suddenly seemed no longer young.

"Is it true, John?"

"It is true," he whispered.

"Why, then, when you had taken another in my place did you deceive me? Why was I allowed to think—"

"Rose, my darling, we did it for the best. We thought you would suffer; we had done you a wrong and were afraid—Rose, Rose, it was for your sake. Can you not forgive?"

John Marshall had drawn near to the woman on whom the shadow of death now plainly lay. Mary crept to the bedside and crouched there with head bowed low. For a long time, hours it seemed to the spell-bound watchers, the dying woman lay silent with her hands clenched over her heart. No sound was heard save the dash of rain upon the window and the crackling of the fire upon the hearth. At last she spoke:

"It would be better for us all if I had died long ago, or if I had never come to myself in the asylum. I have wanted to live, but it does not matter now. I will go to my baby; the Lord will let me have him for my own in heaven. I thought,"—the words came slowly and more faint—"I thought you were all mine, all mine, and you belonged to Mary. I had no one. But John," triumphantly—it was the last flash of the woman nature regardless of human law for love's sake—"John, you loved me best once; you love me now, don't you, John?"

The man, with his head bent upon the pillow, sobbed aloud.

"Always, my darling."

After a pause she spoke again:

"You did not mean to hurt. I have been happy—happy. Kiss me, John."

The face brightened with a strange light.

"Mary, don't cry. I—am—going—to—my—baby. Do—you—see? Mary, forgive ——."

Then the blue eyes looked on death.

A pale gleam of sunshine, the first for days, broke through the clouds and fell upon the still face. Father Allen, with uplifted hands, whispered softly, "Let us pray."

. . . . . .

Six months later, Father Allen and the young pastor, driving across the prairie, stopped again at the Marshall home. Only the wife was within. In answer to a whispered inquiry from the older man, as he departed, she said gently, but with an unconscious touch of defiance in her speech: "I am happy, of course. He is mine, now—all mine. One does not fear the dead."

It was not quite a look of peace that filled her eyes as they left her gazing wistfully down the length of the level road.

A mile beyond, at the other side of the broad prairie farm, was the little cottage where the dead Rose had spent the first brief months of her married life. It had never been occupied since by strangers. A marble shaft gleamed through the trees near by. Against the fence surrounding this leaned John Marshall, absorbed in contemplation of the two flower-grown mounds within. His horse, in the road at a little distance, neighed impatiently, but the watcher gave no heed.

"It seemed to me expedient," said Father Allen, half to himself, as they drove, unnoticed, by; "but I may have been wrong. The Lord knows."

THE SOLUTION OF A TEXT

THERE is a conviction among certain educated people that with increased intellectual culture comes a keener susceptibility to pleasure and pain. Is it so? Turn anywhere among the "short and simple annals of the poor," and we can find passion, and romance, and tragedy. They do not call these incidents of life by such names; they only live them. When love or suffering—and what else is life?—comes to us, we can analyze our emotions, and label them with high-sounding words; we can tell of them in verse, or in language compared to which theirs is but an inarticulate cry. Are our feelings, therefore, deeper?

"Slave! Yassum, an' sot free by de prockelmation. Hab I lib in dis yer house so long an' yo' nebah know I'se done been a slave?" And Aunty Smith, the African dame, who represented that domestic institution known as "our girl," gave the fire a vigorous poke.

"Tell yo' 'bout it? Dar ain't nuffin' to tell wuth the while for yo' to listen. An' ole niggah ain't got no hist'ry—dat's for white folkses.

Didn't I heah yo' a readin' 'bout de hist'ry ob Jawge Washin'ton—an' den talkin' to me? Sho!''

The black lips parted over broad white teeth in a quick laugh, but no smile touched the solemn eyes given to her race by generations of bondage.

''Time to be a-takin' yo' quinine, honey; bettah take it mighty reg'lah ef yo' specks to get dem chills bruck. 'Trouble?' Yas, indeedy, I's had heaps ob trouble, but I nebah did go roun' talkin' 'bout it. Makes mattahs wuss to be forebber a-talkin' an' a-talkin' ob yer trials. An' I's allus noticed dis yer fac', dat mos' people likes to tell deir own 'sperience 'stiddy o' hearin' 'bout yours. Co'se I has to tell somebody an' I tells de Lawd, but 'pears like de Lawd's a long way off, sometimes. Ef I could be shore dat He allus heard a pore niggah I couldn't nebah grieve no mo'.''

''Has doubt seized the believers?'' I thought. ''If the rest of us were sure of that one thing what burdens would be lifted!''

''I's done been mahied fo' times. Yassum! By de preachah ebry time; dey couldn't hab no foolishness wid dis chile. My first husband's

name was Cæsah Mahshall. He b'longed to Kunnel Mahshall, who at dat time was courtin' my mastah's daughtah, Miss Betty, an' ob course Cæsah he spen' a heap ob time 'round dar. Cæsah he a likely boy, an' all de gals tort dey gwine git him. But laws! I knowed he didn't keer for none o' dem niggahs. I did keep a mighty keen eye, dough, on Lize. She a yaller gal allus a-rollin' her eyes an' tossin' her head, an' thinkin' herself good as white folkses; one o' dese yer sly kind, too, a sayin' flatterin' things dat make a man think she a-dyin' for lub o' him. I gib her mighty little chance to try any of her sassy tricks on Cæsah. Men's dat pow'ful vain—you des know it's so, honey—dey swallahs ebry soft an' sugary speech ob de female sect as ef 'twar de libin' trufe. But Cæsah he wouldn't hab no one but des' me. He sayed I was like Solomon's wife dat de Bible tells ob, 'black but comely.' I ax de preachah once ef Solomon was a cullud gemlan. He look scared, an' sayed he couldn't 'splain dat tex' to an ig'nant pusson like me; sayed it didn't mean what it sayed, but was a yallerglory 'bout de chu'ch. Preachahs don't know ebry thing more'n we'uns, an' what's de use for twis'

de words ob de good book diff'rent from what dey is?

"Well, Cæsah an' me we done got mahied, an' lived in a little cabin neah my mastah's house, cause I had to wo'k hahd waitin' on ole mistis an' de young ladies. Dey wore heaps ob fine muslins an' lawns in dem days an' no one could do de washin' an' i'nin' to suit dem but me. But I had a little time in my own house an' Cæsah he come often. I was dat happy I went roun' singin' from mawnin' twel night; neber tort 'bout the nex' day an' what it might bring fo'th. Ef I was too happy with de things ob dis worl', de Lawd knows my heart been heavy dis many yeahs to pay foh it. 'Pears like all dat's happen since has des' teched de outside ob my feelin's an' lef' all de heavenly sweetness ob dat time shet off to itself.

"De time went by twel one mawnin' in de summah Cæsah he agwine to come an' tote de chile ober in de hills to a camp-meetin'. She was two munce old, an' I hadn't neber had her 'way from home befo'. Dar's no tellin' how proud we bofe was ob dat baby.

"Dat mawnin' I dress her an' I waited. De people roun' de place dey get ready an' go.

None ob dem stopped to talk, but I 'membered aft'wards dey look mighty queah at me. Lize, dat yaller gal I'se tellin' yo' ob, she run back an' hug de baby. Yo' pore crittah, I thought, yo'd gib all dat finery for sich a honey-drop!

"An' I waited. Plenty things might ob happen for to keep Cæsah away, so I sang Rosy to sleep. Den somehow I 'gan to 'member de looks an' de whispers dat I hadn't noticed at de time, an' it seem to grow dark, dough de sun was a-shinin'; an' de chills crep ober me. Ole mistis's mockin'-bird up at de big house, how it did sing! I 'spise a mockin'-bird eber sence. I waited—an' aft' while ole mistis come walkin' down the paf. She was bawn an' raised in de Nawf, was ole mistis, an' neber 'peared to like de black people. She hab berry sharp eyes—'bout de color ob de blade ob a new razah,—an' when she come close an' look at me I felt as ef dey cut me clean froo. She hab a soft voice, an' dar was a little smile on her face when she tole me—she tole me—she stretch up an' pick some yaller roses from de bush dat grow'd ober de do', an' she say dat if I 'spect to git to camp-meetin' I better be agwine; dat I'd haf to pack de chile de whole way, for Cæsah he fur

'nough off now. She tole me he been sold down Souf, whar he'd be 'bliged to pick cotton an' git ober some ob his fine notions.

"When she were gone 'way I tore de yaller rosebush down an' tromp it undah my feet. Aftah dat for a spell I don't rightly 'member what happened. Dey tole me dat Cæsah he try to 'scape frum de tradahs; dat dey chase him wid de dogs, an' when de men tort he gwine to cross de ribah dey done shoot him dead. Heabenly Mastah! an' I lubed him so!

"I lib through it all. Many a woman, black or white, could tell yo' dat she goes on a-libin' an' every night a-prayin' de Lawd her soul to take.

"I foun' out dat Kunnel Mahshall he felt so mighty pore dat he had to sell some of his people. De Kunnel he one o' de real Kentucky gemlen; great man to be a-bettin' an' a-hoss racin'. He'd loss a heap of money on his fas' hoss, 'kase it wasn't so fas' as some o' de rest, an' he an' Miss Betty gwine to be mahied; so ob co'se he must hab money—an' he sold Cæsah.

"Den Rosy died; an' when I look at her in de little coffin I's dat glad I couldn't cry. I's glad, honey, 'kase she nebber hab no trouble.

"Well, de time go on, an' diff'rent men dey ax me to marry, but I tole dem to go off 'bout deir business. But laws! a man cain't b'lieve a woman don't keer nuffin fer him! So dey kep hangin' roun' twel Mistis she say I mus' marry. Mistis she hab a thrifty turn an' wanted all her people to marry an' raise chillen, kase chillen proputty in dem days. Bless de Lawd! I didn't hab no mo' chillen fer her to count as I do de pigs.

"At las' I mahied Big Tom to git shet ob him, but I done miss it, fer shore as yo' lib, dat crittah tuck de kinsumption. He war de mos' misable, no-'count niggah I 'member to hab knowed. I waited on dat man night an' day, an' like to run my laigs off; tried to be as good to him as 'ef he were de light ob my eyes; but nuffin pleased him no ways. One day he shied a flat-i'n at me an' cut a gash ober my lef' year. De scar's dah yit. I's pow'ful mad den, an' says I, 'Ole man, ye kin cough yo' livah an' lights up foh all me, an' de soonah de bettah.'

"'Bout dat time mastah done send him down de ribah on some business. Tom he were mastah's right han', an' mastah didn't pay no 'tention to de kinsumption dat he say ailded

him. Well, de steamboat blowed up, an' I s'pose Tom done get blowed up too, for I's neber seed him since.

"Aft' dat, a spell, I mahied Joe, 'kase he was lively, an' kept us all a-laughin' with his jokes. He played de fiddle like an angel, too, an' when I sot an' listened, seemed as ef I could see beyond the stahs clar into de New Jerusalem. But Joe didn't have good jedgment 'bout some mattahs. De wah was gwine on by dis time, an' nuffin' would do but Joe he mus' go with Kunnel Mahshall down into Jawgy for to jine de 'federate ahmy. De Kunnel was his mastah, but he didn't hab to go. He was gwine to be a drummah, an' was dat heedless he nevah 'flected dad he was on de wrong side; reckon he nevah s'posed dar'd be anything else but playin' on de fife an' drum. In de berry fust skrimmage dey had, Joe was killed. Might a knowed he'd hab bad luck, an' I tole him so 'fore he went. Joe had a good heart, dough, an' I don't 'spect de Lawd will be hahd on him for habin' been bawn so giddy.

"Aftah while, when de prockelmation set de culled people free, de family bruck up, an' I went up to Louieville for to get washin' an i'nin'.

Dah I met Mistah Smith at pra'r-meetin'. He were pow'ful in pra'r, an' he seem struck with my 'pearance (I had on my violent dress for de fust time). At de second pra'r-meetin' he tole me he'd had a hebenly vision which sayed I was to be his second pahtnah. Co'se I couldn't stan' out 'gainst de will ob de Lawd, an' dat's why I's now Mrs Smith. His name was Obadiah, but he 'quested me for to call him Mistah Smith; sayed it 'corded bettah wid de condition ob de woman to be 'spectful to de husban'; man, he say, bein' so s'perior.

"Mistah Smith an' me we done git along comf'tably twel he died, which was des befo' I come heah. I nebah had no fault to fine, 'cept dat he did talk too much 'bout de fust Mrs. Smith. I's had a heap ob trouble wid dat boy ob hers, but I's tried to do my juty by him. I's whipped him once a week reg'lah, 'kase he's pow'ful bad, but he's mos' too big for me now, an' I'se 'fraid de debbil 'll ketch him.

"What'll I do in hebben wid so many husban's? I won't hab but one, bless de Lawd, an' dat's Cæsah. Tom he won't be dah; Joe he'll be so tuck up wid de harps an' de banjos

dat he won't think ob nuffin' else; an' Mistah Smith can 'joy hisself wid dat fust wife.

"I'll hab Cæsah an' I'll hab Rosy, an' we'll hab a little mansion with a passion vine an' roses roun' de do'; an' we'll be happy for ebber an' ebber. Glory! Glory!"

The light that shone on the black face as she turned away was a token of faith and hope; an outward sign of an inward grace the whitest of us seldom wear.

Floating back to the room, like an echo of a thought, came a triumphant voice:

"Dah ebahlasting spring abides,
An' nevah fading flowahs."

AN OCCULT EXPERIENCE

MRS. ABNER HALE and Mrs. Silas Adams walked slowly out Main street after the regular Thursday meeting of the Branchville Ladies' Literary Circle. When these ladies organized their society they decided to call it a circle instead of a club, because the latter word sounded "so mannish, somehow."

"That was a beautiful paper of Alfaretta Miller's on theosophy," Mrs. Hale remarked, in rather a questioning way.

"Oh, lovely!" said her companion, in the tone women use when they wish to be agreeable, no matter what their real thoughts may be concerning the matter under discussion. "Yes, Alfaretta can write on most any subject. She's got a good mind. She's a credit to our Circle."

"What idea did you get from the paper?" pursued Mrs. Hale, hesitatingly, and then, with an impetuous outburst, "Martha Adams, what *is* theosophy, anyway?"

"Land! Mrs. Hale, don't ask me. I haven't the faintest idea, and never expect to have, if I should hear a dozen papers. Alfaretta wanted me to be prepared to discuss the subject and loaned me a book to read up in, but it made me dizzy. I did copy a sentence or two out, though, that I meant to recite off at the proper time, just to show that I wasn't ignorant, but I forgot it. To tell the truth, I kind of lost track of what she was saying in studying out just how the trimming was fixed on Jennie Wilson's new silk waist. I'm making one for my Sis, you know. Near as I can get at it, from all I've read and heard, theosophy is a sort of spiritualism that the heathen believe in and that our folks have taken up out of curiosity—sort of a moony, spooky thing, with spheres and mahatmas—whatever they are—and astral bodies, and ever-so-many-times-on-earth, and all that kind of foolishness. I ain't sure that it's quite the thing to talk about in our Circle. Some that's not so well balanced as you and me might be influenced by it. Not but what there's deep things that it would be real satisfying to know about. Sometimes I think there's something

genuine about spiritualism—the rapping and slate-writing kind."

Mrs. Hale looked at the speaker with an expression of severe disapproval, but had no chance to utter a word of protest before that voluble lady began again.

"Yes, I do, Mrs. Hale. Lemme tell you something." Here Mrs. Adams's voice was lowered to a confidential whisper, although no one was within sight or hearing. "The most of it's foolishness, I'll allow, and there's a lot of humbuggery about it, but there's queer, unaccountable things, too. Cousin Jim Lawson's wife was telling me one of 'em the last time I was in Indianapolis. She'd been to visit a slate-writing medium and had had a communication from her mother, who'd died suddenly not long before when she was away from home on a visit. Cousin Jim's wife couldn't reconcile herself to having no last word, and so she went to this medium, who, it seems, is no common person, but a real lady. She'd always had the power, but only a few knew about it, and she never thought of earning money by it until after she was left a widow and had to do something to make a living for herself and little girl."

"Well"—and here the whisper grew more impressive—"Cousin Jim's wife, she went and never told her name or anything, and right inside of that double slate, with the medium's hands laid flat on top in plain sight, came a message signed by her mother, Eunice Bascom, telling her she (Mrs. Bascom) was very happy, was glad to have the opportunity to talk to her and urge her to be reconciled, and also to tell her to give her (the mother's) cashmere dress and her wrappers and aprons to Jane, the other daughter, and to keep the new black silk and the fur collar herself. Cousin Jim's wife said you could a' knocked her down with a feather. The thought had come to her several times that that would be a fair way to divide their mother's things, seeing she had so much more use for dressy clothes than Jane, who lived in the country and never went anywhere, but she hadn't had the clothes in mind that day at all, and had no notion anything would be said about them. It was a real comfort to her, though, to have what you might call official authority for disposing of the garments, for she'd been a little afraid Jane would be inclined to complain; so she bought the slate

with the writing on and took it home with her. Now, Mrs. Hale, wasn't that remarkable?''

''It seems to me,'' protested that lady in reply, ''that I shouldn't like to have my mother come back from the other world to talk about clothes,'' but as she was going on to express her fixed objection to such doings, such unholy tampering with sacred things, as she considered it, they reached Mrs. Adams's gate, and that sprightly person, after unavailingly urging her companion to enter, hurried in, saying she would sew a little on Sis's waist before dark.

Mrs. Hale, who was not really a townswoman at all, but a farmer's wife, and lived nearly a mile beyond the point where the highway ceased to be a street and became the pike, went leisurely on her way over the quiet country road, saying to herself, with a shake of the head, that Martha Adams was a good soul, but too ready to believe everything she heard. Then her mind drifted to other matters. She always remembered her wandering thoughts of that afternoon, and sometimes spoke of them long after, as showing how little foreknowledge has the human mind. She thought complacently of her own paper on the French Revolution, which she

had read before the Circle the week previous
She was sixty years old and had never don
such a thing before, and it was a great event i
her life, but she told her husband, when it wa
over, that she didn't see but what her piece wa
"full as good as the average." She owne
frankly that she got the most of it from the en
cyclopedia and the rest from an old magazin
belonging to Joe, "but, of course, they couldn'
expect me to write a thing like that out of m
own head," she said, "and if I used the sam
language, why, what's the difference? I'm sur
I couldn't have said it as well, and, anyway, i
was all new to the Circle."

But the Circle soon passed into the back
ground on this autumn afternoon, and Joe, neve
far from the front in the mother's mind, occu
pied her thoughts exclusively—Joe, the son o
her old age, she called him. He was a youn
civil engineer, and through the influence of a
instructor in the school of which he was a grad
uate had had the good fortune, as he considere
it, to be made one of a government surveyin
party to Alaska that summer, starting in Apri
He was on his way home now. A letter ha
come from Seattle saying he had left the party

which was coming east over the northern route, and was about to go down the coast in a small sailing vessel, whose captain had happened to take a liking to him. He did this because it was inexpensive and he wanted a glimpse of California, not knowing when he should visit the western coast again. He must have reached San Francisco by this time, his mother reflected, and another letter was nearly due, though possibly he would not think it worth while to write, he was coming so soon himself. Mrs. Hale's fond heart beat faster at the very thought of seeing her boy once more, and as she looked about her over the fields, golden with the September sunshine, the sight, dear from long association, seemed to take on a new charm. It was a beautiful world, she thought, not realizing that it was the contentment of her soul that made the Indiana landscape doubly fair.

She entered the door of her home with a song in her heart and upon her lips. She put her bonnet carefully away, and, with a look at the clock to assure herself that she had yet a few minutes before it was time to prepare supper for Abner and the hired man, she sat down to rest and to glance at the paper she had brought

from the post-office. She opened the sheet and looked over it with mild interest. What fate turned her eyes straight upon the obscure paragraph that in times of much news would have found no space in the inland paper? Thus blindly and unsuspectingly are we led into the tragedies of our lives. It was a brief dispatch, dated at San Francisco, and mentioning the sinking of the schooner Yakima through being run down by the steamship Montana. The Yakima was bound for San Francisco with a cargo of coal, and filled and sank so rapidly after the collision that only one person on board escaped. The Montana put out her boats and picked up one sailor, who reported that in addition to the crew the schooner had had on board one passenger, a man from Indiana named Hale. The cause of the accident would be investigated and the responsibility fixed, said the dispatch.

The mind comprehends slowly the full meaning of death when a loved one has gone. It is only as weeks and months pass that the loss, the desolation, the awful loneliness are realized. Sitting with her paper in her hand that afternoon, Mrs. Hale saw her husband coming through the orchard, and her first conscious

thought was one of pity for him that he had no son. Concerning her own bereavement she had, as yet, no sensation; the sudden blow had made her numb. She watched him come slowly and heavily through the gate and up the walk—a gray-haired man, with bent shoulders, who had not kept his youthful elasticity as had his wife.

"He has not many years of grief to bear," she said, as she went out to him, bearing the message of evil.

The history of the next few days she could hardly have told later. She went about her household tasks mechanically, for the living must eat and drink, though the best loved lie dead, but her mind wandered far and scarce knew what her hands did. There was a sending of telegraphic messages, a writing of letters and the gathering of all the information that could be secured, but this was little more than the first newspaper dispatch had contained. The Yakima had sunk, only one person on board had been picked up at the time—which was just after midnight on the 20th of September—and the sea being rough that night there was no proba-

bility, even had any one been overlooked in the careful search made, that a survivor could have remained afloat till morning.

Hope, catching at the faintest chance, died hard, but when weeks went by and brought no word Joseph Hale's death was accepted as a certainty. His mother put on a black gown; his father went to and fro about his work with a look that made the neighbors say he was aging fast; they tried to bear their affliction with the fortitude and resignation becoming to their Christian professions, but they knew that for them the zest of life had passed with their son's going, and that the years to come must be endured, not enjoyed. They read the grief in each other's eyes, but spoke little of it, Abner being taciturn at all times, and his wife, like so many men and women of the Anglo-Saxon race, never having learned to express her deepest emotions in words.

One day in October services in memory of the young man were held in the Presbyterian church. Sympathy with the bereaved parents was deep, and the curious, but not unkindly, desire of their friends to see how they were affected by the remarks of the minister, and how they bore

their sorrow, caused the emotion of a young woman near the door to go unnoticed. She was Nellie Hamilton, a teacher in one of the village schools. She and Joe Hale had known each other all their lives, and were on such friendly footing and so free from self-consciousness that no one had thought of them as lovers. She had been aware for a long time of the state of her own affections, but it was only a few days before his departure that Joe had begun to learn where his heart belonged. She had seen the awakening in his eyes; she had felt it in the subtle change of manner; she had read his secret through the prescience of her own love, and her heart leaped in her bosom and was glad. He had not spoken before he went away, but she did not feel the less secure, for she saw also that he had not discovered her secret, and was in that state of doubt where he feared to test his fate. Maiden-like, and with a touch of coquetry, she had refrained from betraying a hint of the truth, coyly holding back, confident in the knowledge that when she chose to offer a sign he would come. Not long since had come a letter telling her that on his return he had a question to ask—one which he had "always

thought a man ought to be brave enough to put to a woman face to face, and not by letter." A reply would not have reached him had she written it, and now he was dead; he was dead and would never know; was dead and she had not the right to weep for him, but must go about with calm face, for she had not let him speak, and he was not hers in the sight of the world. She envied his mother the liberty of tears, of outspoken grief and of unsmiling face. Life was bitter.

The days went on drearily. Mrs. Hale neglected the Ladies' Circle, the Missionary Society and all the various interests that had made her social world, and, shut in her rural home, brooded over her loss. October passed and November came, with heavier rains and more lowering clouds, it seemed, than ever November had had before. Thanksgiving day approached, and Mrs. Hale grew restless. On that day it had been the custom to invite to dinner all the kinfolk living thereabout, but this time she and her husband could not make festivity for themselves or others. When the morning came Mrs. Hale arose and went about her tasks with an unusual look of determination.

"Father," she said to her husband at breakfast, "I don't feel as if I could go to our church this morning, and I am going into the city. I know you don't want to go, so I sha'n't ask you. I'll come out on the one-o'clock train, which will give me time to have dinner by three. It'll be a good dinner. I've fixed ready for it."

Abner offered no objection to the plan, but hitched up the horse and took his wife to the train, meeting her, also, upon her return. Her face bore a different expression, he noticed, from that it had worn in the morning—a brighter, more cheerful look. They chatted of various things on their way home—of Rev. Mr. Willetts's sermon, which Abner had heard; of the music by the new choir, which Abner did not like, because he didn't know what was being sung—tunes or words.

"That Hamilton girl—Nellie is her name, isn't it?—took sick in meeting," he said casually. "Screamed and had to be helped out to the air. Hystericky, I guess."

"Poor thing!" commented his wife. "I expect she's overworked and run down. I must ask her out to spend some Sunday. She and Joe used to be good friends."

They ate their Thanksgiving dinner rather silently and their thanks were not fervent, but perhaps the Lord forgave them, knowing their sore hearts. It was not till dinner was over and Abner's chores done that Mrs. Hale disclosed the purpose of her morning's visit to Indianapolis and its result. It had not occurred to her husband's rather slow-moving mind, until that moment, that she had as yet said nothing about it. He had assumed that she had attended a city church and had received consolation from the words of the pastor. If she was nervous over the confession of a different course of action she did not betray the feeling, but went boldly about it.

"Father, I've got something to tell you. I went in town to-day and visited a spiritualist medium—a slate-writer. She didn't know I was coming. She didn't know my name. She didn't ask a question, but she sat down at a little table, took this little folding slate that Johnny Miller left here (I carried it with me), laid her hands on it, never a minute out of my sight, and while I was looking the little pencil inside began to scratch, and when it stopped here was this writ-

ing," and Mrs. Hale produced the slate and began to read from its pages.

"Dear Mother," the writing ran. "Dear Mother: I am so glad you have come at last. Have been looking for you anxiously. I knew you grieved because I passed into the spirit world before you, and because you knew so little of the going, but I knew you never believed that one who had gone could ever return and talk to his friends, so was afraid the truth would not be impressed on you and you would not come. But it is true, mother. This is your own Joey boy. It was all true about the shipwreck; we went down without warning and were drowned. I didn't have time to think about it, and you will be glad to know I didn't suffer. I shouldn't have wanted to go if I had known beforehand what was to happen, but it's all right now. I am happy — perfectly happy. Everything is beautiful here. I can't tell you just how it is, because we are not permitted, but you will know some day. Father isn't looking well. Now that that affair of Lester's is off his mind he ought to cheer up. Tell him not to fret about me. It's all right. Come and talk

to me again some day soon. Your loving son, Joseph Albert Hale."

Down in one corner was added: "What have you done with old Major? I don't see him about."

Mrs. Hale read this communication, as she called it, slowly and impressively, but with visible excitement and elation. Then she paused a moment for her husband to speak, but he remained silent, and she burst out:

"Isn't it wonderful, Abner? I know you never believed in spiritualism, and neither did I, but you can't deny that there's something in this. Why, here's Joe's very own handwriting, and his signature, with the quirl at the end that he always makes and his middle name written out in full. That was a notion he picked up when he was at school, but I never could get into the fashion of addressing his letters any other way than 'Joseph A.' And in the letter he calls himself 'Joey boy.' I used to call him 'Joey,' you know, for a pet name. And who but Joey could have mentioned that trouble with his cousin Lester, when only we four ever knew you got the young rascal out of a scrape, and you know very well none of us ever mentioned

it—Lester least of all. Then, father, he says you are not looking well, which is true, and shows he must have seen you. Think of that! And he missed old Major. I never wrote to him that the dog had died; kind of hated to. I tell you, father, it's wonderful, wonderful! I never would have believed that I could have an atom of faith in spiritualism, and I must say that I wish Joe could communicate with us at first hand, and not through a total stranger. But this way is better than nothing, and what I've got here's a great comfort to me. I'm going again, and if you—"

Abner's face had slowly assumed an expression that caused his wife to pause suddenly and observe him with some apprehension. He looked at her fixedly and sternly, then spoke with a voice trembling with anger:

"Sarah Jane!" They addressed each other in the sweet, old-fashioned way, as "father" and "mother," except on those occasions when storms loomed in the domestic sky. "Sarah Jane Hale, has it come to this, that you, a professing Christian for forty years, a member of the Presbyterian church in good standing; that you, the wife of a ruling elder, have taken up

with this abominable witchcraft, and have the indecency to glory in it? Have you not read that the wrath of God comes upon those who practice such vile arts? Have you forgotten your religion? Do you care nothing for the safety of your immortal soul? I am shocked, Sarah Jane! I am astonished and grieved, and I insist that there shall be no more of this idolatrous business. It was thoughtlessness that led you to the den of the witch this time, may be, but the visit must not be repeated. I want you to promise not to go again, and I should like to hear you say you are sorry for this visit."

Mrs. Hale, after a gasp of surprise, got her breath and her bearings.

"She is not a witch, but a respectable lady, I'd have you know, Abner Hale, and she doesn't live in a den, but in a house that's better than this one, and she's a member of the Baptist church. And I wouldn't be as narrow-minded and stiff-necked as you are for a farm. There's things in this world that you haven't found out yet, if you are a ruling elder; and, anyway, I won't be dictated to just as if I were a disobedient child and had no judgment or rights of my own. You don't seem to understand how I miss Joe.

It was a real comfort to me, that letter from him, and I'm not sorry I went, and I shall go again if I want to. So there!"

After which feminine outburst she threw herself upon the lounge and sobbed with as much abandon as if she were ten years old instead of sixty. Abner was not moved to compassion by her tears.

"Sarah Jane," he said, solemnly, "I am disappointed. I have always considered you a sensible woman—one not likely to be led away from true Christian principles, though at times you haven't been as faithful to the means of grace as would be becoming in an elder's wife. I know Joe's death was hard on you. He was was my son, too, but I haven't found it necessary to consort with Satan's emissaries for comfort. This taking up with evil things is a matter that calls for church discipline. It ought to he laid before the session, but I ain't ready to do that yet, Sarah Jane. I want you to have time to consider the iniquity of your course before it is made public, and until you can realize it I sha'n't speak a word to you, not a word from this hour."

Mrs. Hale dried her tears suddenly and sat up, looking at her husband with curiosity.

"Are you six years old or sixty-five, Abner Hale, getting mad and 'not speaking?'" she inquired, sharply.

Abner deigned no reply, but wound the clock, kicked the cat out and slammed the door with more energy than was becoming to a ruling elder, then stalked majestically off to bed in silence.

Mrs. Hale was not especially overcome by this exhibition of conjugal authority. The neighbors were wont to speak of Mr. Hale as "terribly set in his ways and domineering." On account of these traits the women were inclined to congratulate themselves on not being married to him, but this feeling was not really a sound basis for an adverse verdict on his character. The disposition of women to wonder how other women can "put up" with their respective husbands arises, perhaps, out of feminine inability to comprehend thoroughly the idiosyncrasies of more than one man at a time. Not all wives are martyrs who seem so to outside eyes. At all events, Mrs. Hale had never so regarded herself, and did not now. She had lived with Ab-

ner for forty years and understood him. He had "ways," and she had adapted herself to them, bringing him, in the long run, to her way of thinking; or, at least, so modifying his asperities of thought and character as to make him quite satisfactory to her. She had never run so directly counter to his prejudices as in this case, but was not alarmed at his wrath and only moderately resentful.

"I didn't suppose he'd take it so hard," she said long afterward, "but I might have remembered that he hadn't been thinking the matter over for a month or so, as I had. I ought to have talked it up to him in advance and got him into the notion by degrees. Poor soul! He tried not to show it, but he grieved for Joe every day and all day while he was alone at his work, and his nerves were all wrought up. Women ain't the only ones that get cross and crabbed from nervousness. However, I wasn't going to give in right at once. I didn't want him to think he could dictate to me that way. It doesn't do to give a man such an advantage, even once."

Down in the village that Thanksgiving night, while this domestic episode took place in the farm-house, pretty Nellie Hamilton lay upon her

bed with wide-open eyes, staring into the dark, her mind intent upon the experience of the morning. The choir had performed its final "voluntary," the minister had just given out his text, "Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving," and the congregation was settling itself into the pews, when choir, minister and people faded out of sight and she looked upon a far different scene—not only looked upon it, but seemed a part of it. There before her, almost at her feet, was a lake, half shadowed by a mountain, whose bare and rocky summit pierced the sky. A vivid green forest, whose appearance was strange and tropical, circled the water and was thick about her. In a little opening were two or three huts, and near them, swung between two trees, was a hammock, in which lay her lover, Joe Hale. Pale and ill he looked, but was unmistakably Joe. As she stood, or seemed to stand, ready to step forward to his side, so softly as not to awaken him, she became aware of a swarthy, half-clothed foreign-looking man slipping toward the hammock from the further side. His face wore an evil look, and he glanced furtively about. His hand crept toward the pocket in the breast of the flanne

shirt worn by the occupant of the hammock, but the movement, soft as it was, roused the sleeper, and he started up. Quicker than it could be told, a bright blade flashed in the air, blood spurted over the sick man's breast and he fell back as if dead. It was at this moment that Nellie Hamilton startled the congregation with a scream, and was assisted to her home under the belief that she was suddenly taken ill.

Lying there, puzzling over it, she could not solve the mystery. It could not be a dream. She had just seated herself when the vision came, and had had no time in which to grow drowsy if she were so inclined. She was thinking of Joe at the time; it was seldom in those days that he was far from her mind, but she pictured him as battling with fierce waves, and as sinking slowly, surely, and, at last, despairingly, into their cruel depths—a hideous vision that haunted her, awake or asleep. She had never associated him with far southern lands; she had never been outside of her own state of Indiana, yet she knew that an actual tropical landscape could never be more real to her than this phantasmal scene of the morning. She could almost see it yet—the shining green of trees, whose names she did not

know, the vines that stretched from branch t
branch like great serpents, the rank undergrowth
the intense blue of the sky, the mountain, wit
its upper height a bare, stony peak. What di
it mean? She remembered hearing her Scotc
grandfather talk mysteriously of second sight
but had never troubled herself to know just wha
he meant, and she had never before had an ex
perience like this. Besides, if Joe had bee
drowned in the Pacific, and he must have bee
drowned, or he would have been heard from lon
ago, this vision must have been a delusion
Could she be losing her mind? she wondere
drearily, and fell at last into troubled sleep.

The days and weeks dragged slowly by
Abner Hale kept strictly to the letter of hi
threat to speak no word to his wife until sh
showed signs of repentance for what he con
sidered her ill conduct. She addressed hi
freely when occasion required, and sometime
when it did not, but he made the hired man hi
medium of communication, directing his re
marks ostensibly to that personage, but reall
to Mrs. Hale; and the hired man, being but
stupid creature, concerned more with eating a
that was set before him than with what went o

in the house, never discovered that he was used as a convenience. With neighbors who dropped in Abner talked freely and even eagerly, which, in view of his usual taciturnity, caused them some surprise. Once his wife detected him furtively examining the slate containing Joe's letter, which she kept in a drawer of Joe's old desk, but he showed no sign of interest when she made another visit to the city, and he had reason to assume that she again visited the woman he had denounced as an agent of the evil one.

She did, in fact, visit that person, not once, but twice or more, as the holidays drew near, and she felt the need of aid in resisting the depressing influences of other people's gayety. Each time was repeated, with somewhat greater amplification, the story that had been told on the slate the first day. Each time some allusions were made or questions asked which convinced her anew that Joe's spirit must inspire the pencil's movements, since none but he and herself had knowledge of the matters involved. Each time came the assurance afresh that the unseen writer was Joe, her son, come back to her in this way from the other world. She

could not doubt that this was true, but somehow the slate writings did not continue to be the comfort to her that she had first found them. There was a consciousness of something lacking, something unsatisfactory; there was a barrier between her and her son that she could not overcome. He told her so little, after all. It dawned on her one day that he had really written nothing that she had not herself known or believed before. She was thinking of this as she left the station one afternoon on her way home from one of these visits, and had wondered if it would not be just as well to fall in with Abner's notions and tell him she was willing to give up the medium. "But I won't do it just yet," she decided. "He hasn't been behaving well, and I don't want to encourage him in such doings by giving in so easily. He ought to come half way, anyhow, and I think he will before long. He's getting very uneasy."

Nevertheless, she sighed as she thought of her silent home, and when she chanced to meet Nellie Hamilton, something wistful in the girl's face attracted her notice and she urged her to accom-

pany her to the farm. Visitors were always welcome now.

"Come out and spend the afternoon with me, and if, as you say, you must be home to-night, Abner will bring you."

It was the last day of the year, but the clear, crisp air and the bright sunshine brought suggestions of spring, and both women felt cheered in a vague way when they reached the country home. Mrs. Hale talked to Nellie of her lost son that afternoon, and found a sympathetic listener. She related anecdotes of his boyhood; she brought out the tintypes and photographs he had had taken at various stages of his career; she showed specimens of his handiwork about the house; she told how thoughtful and considerate he was always and what a source of comfort. But with all the confidences bestowed she did not mention her visits to the medium or the story on the slate; all that was too intimate an experience to relate to this girl, who, for all her evident appreciation of Joe, might have an ignorant prejudice against spiritualistic manifestations. She had had it herself not so long ago. Nor did Nellie Hamilton venture to tell the elder

woman of her vision on Thanksgiving day, nor of the later one the day before Christmas.

It rained on the latter occasion, and as she stood on the school-house step, looking up the dreary street, after the children had gone home, suddenly street and houses vanished, the dark sky cleared, and before her stretched a wide sweep of gray, sandy desert, patches of gray-green vegetation only adding to the dreariness; not far distant were barren hills, and beyond them arose mountains, gray, too, and craggy, with lines of white near their summits, glittering in the pitiless sunshine. Almost at her feet lay a horse, gasping as if for breath, his tongue, cracked and bleeding, hanging from his mouth. Near him a man was stretched face downward on the sand. As she looked he raised his head, and, with dull eyes, gazed drearily about, but she had not needed the movement to know that the man was Joe Hale. He was gaunt of frame, but his face was brown, not white, as she had seen it the other time, and there was a red scar on his forehead not there before. The gray desert stretched away until it melted into the horizon line, and no other creature was in sight in all its space. But while she looked, and be-

fore she could take the one step forward that seemed to divide her from the man she loved, the scene was changed, and she stood upon the school-house steps, staring blankly into the muddy street of Branchville.

She began to be afraid of herself, and would have liked to take Joe's mother into her confidence and ask what these visions could mean, but had not the courage. So the two women talked together about one who was so dear to both, and each kept from the other her closest thoughts concerning him. After supper, when the guest would go, pleading duties that demanded her attention in the early New Year's morning, Abner entreated delay, and as they sat about the fire he, too, conscious of sympathy, fell to relating stories of the dear lost son. And while they talked the gate opened, a step was heard on the walk, then on the porch, and Mrs. Hale, her face suddenly radiant with hope and joy, rose swiftly, and before he could touch the latch opened the door to her son. The intuition of the mother rose superior at this moment to the mysterious power that brought visions from far off to the younger woman.

There were laughter and tears, kisses and

embraces, and if the visitor shared these neither father nor mother stopped to wonder. There were incoherent questions and answers when all talked at once and no one listened; there was silence of deep emotion as the parents looked upon their boy, who had been lost and was found, and put their hands upon him again and again to be convinced anew that he was truly in the flesh. And when the excitement quieted they all gathered close while Joe told them the story of his adventures; how he had been shipwrecked, as they had read in the papers; how the steamship had made little effort instead of much to save its victims; how he had clung to a floating plank till morning and had been picked up by a tramp boat which had mysterious errands, whose nature he did not inquire, to Central American ports, and was anxious to avoid California harbors for reasons that he suspected to have connection with customs officers.

He told how, at his own solicitation, he was put ashore at the first Guatemalan port, and how, instead of being able to work his way back to San Francisco, as he had hoped, being without money after the shipwreck, he fell ill with fever and would have fared badly but for a party

of American miners and prospectors, themselves scant of funds, who ran across him, doctored him, and took him far into the interior before he fairly realized their kind purpose. They were going north overland in search of one of the famous lost mines of Mexico, to whose location they thought they had a clew. It was a wild country they traveled through, and their journeying was slow. They did not come near the civilization of which railroad trains and telegraph wires were a part, and so he wrote no letters, but looked forward to the day when he should reach home in person, and fretted that progress was so slow.

"I had one or two close calls," he said lightly, with the disregard for dangers past common to the young. "While I was lying in a hammock one day (it was the Thanksgiving day here, by the way, and I was dreaming of home), a Mexican thief crept up and gave me this," touching a scar on his forehead, "and another on my shoulder. He aimed at my heart, of course, and it's a wonder he missed. And only last Monday, just a week ago to-day, I thought I was gone. I had left my friends to their rainbow chasing and started to make the rest of the

way to Tucson alone. I wandered off the trail, my skeleton of a horse broke down—we were both famished for water—and I thought for a bit that the jig was up. But while I was on the sand thinking the matter over, what did I hear—or, rather, feel—but the faint jarring of a railroad train and the echo of a far-off whistle! It was miles away, but I knew I was all right. It was the sweetest music I ever heard. Actually, the old horse pricked up his ears, scrambled to his feet and jogged on. We struck the track after two or three hours and followed it to a station. From there I got to Tucson, where Tom Bailey, my old room-mate, is, and he lent me money to get home with. So here I am."

The women shuddered at the tale, and looked upon this youth, who talked so carelessly of his perils, as a hero of heroes.

The hour grew late, and Nellie, making a movement of withdrawal, found Joe eager with his proposal to accompany her. She was unwilling to disturb the family group, but read entreaty in the young man's eyes, and so declined her hostess's invitation to remain. They scorned the thought of driving, and went out gayly to walk the short mile on the highway, that was

to them that night a path to paradise. Under the moonlit sky Joe asked her the question he had said ought never to be written, and she whispered her answer so low that even the owl blinking in the tree overhead could not hear. But Joe heard.

As they loitered down the road, unmindful that it was the season of frost and not of roses, she told him of her visions, and a wonder fell upon them that she had seen so true. Yet, after all, they reflected, with the beautiful confidence of youth in the supreme power of love, it was not so strange that two souls in such harmony as theirs should come to each other across the world. As they looked up at the starry sky, thinking of this, heaven seemed very near, and they caught a glimpse of its mysteries. Then the bells rang that ushered in a new year, and they felt that it was the beginning of life for them.

Back in the farm-house another subject was under discussion. Mrs. Hale had stood in the doorway looking after her son with a pang at her heart in spite of her joy at his return. Sudden insight had come to her, and she knew that though the lost was found he would never be all

her own again. She sighed as she shut the door and turned, with absent-minded gaze, toward her husband. He sat by the fire, with a hand on each knee and a puzzled expression on his face. Through all the confusion and excitement of the evening he had remained faithful to his promise, and had not addressed a word to his wife, but now, without preamble, and as if no silence had intervened, he began:

"Mother, what do you reckon it was that made the writing on them slates at Madame Victorine's?"

"I don't know," she answered. "It certainly wasn't Joe, for he didn't get drowned and he wasn't dead, and still some of the things written were family matters no one could have knowledge of but one of us three. But it wasn't Madame Victorine; it was Mrs. Mary Ellen Johnson who was the medium." Then, with the swift intuition of a woman who reads her husband like a book: "Abner Hale, I believe you went to visit Madame Victorine yourself to get slate writings, or you wouldn't know anything about her! You did. I know by your sheepish look you did. Madame Victorine, of all creatures, too! Why, she isn't a decent

woman, if all they say's true; five or six husbands, and nobody knows where one of 'em is, or whether they're alive or dead. You ought to be ashamed of yourself—an elder in the church. And all the time holding off from speaking to your own wife."

Abner got in a word here.

"I wanted to investigate a little on your account, and I thought you mentioned Madame Victorine," he urged, feebly.

"My account—nothing!" was her scornful ejaculation. "You were just filled with curiosity, for one thing, and a desire to hear from Joe, for another—don't deny it! And not speaking a word to me for a whole month, and talking of church discipline! Huh!"

Abner had risen to his feet and affected a dignity it was obvious he did not altogether feel.

"Well, mother," he said, in a conciliatory tone, but with the masculine reluctance to owning himself in the wrong clearly apparent; "well, mother, I guess we haven't either of us done anything we want to talk about before folks. It looks as if the devil was in the thing, anyway, as I told you at first. I guess we'd better say

nothing about the matter to any one—to any one, not even to Joe."

She looked at him intently and reflected for a moment, then laughed a little, not being without humor.

"I guess so, too," she said.

And she never did mention the affair to any one but Joe, who, of course, told his wife.

AN ITINERANT PAIR

WERE you ever at Michigan City, in Indiana? Stop! Let me put the question more carefully. Were you ever compelled to wait for a train at Michigan City? The first inquiry sounds innocent enough, but a Hoosier would detect a covert insult in it. Why? Because one of the three state penitentiaries is situated there and is the town's chief distinction to the outside public. A native of the state living elsewhere can conceive of no reason why a man should voluntarily take up his residence in the place, or even why he should "stop off," except to visit some erring and unfortunate relative. Hence, to avoid trouble, those persons in search of local information do well to be on their guard.

I had passed through, many times, on my way to and from Chicago, but until this trip had

never taken closer observations than through the car windows. To-day the "lightning express" on the Michigan Central road was three hours too early for the one train that in those days—some years ago now—daily jogged along down the road leading south. What should I do with the time? I looked into the waiting-room of the station. No passenger had left the train but myself, and the place was empty save for an old couple, who had evidently just come in from the country.

I went out and explored the town. Up one street and down another I strolled, until the circuit was made. In every direction was sand—mountains of sand, valleys of sand. It was in drifts upon the sidewalks, in hillocks in the streets. The houses were built upon it. Many dwellings leaned from the perpendicular at various angles, according to their age, the shifty foundations had so worn away and blown away. Though it was a bright April day but few people were on the street, and these seemed in haste to disappear as soon as seen. It may have been a biased imagination that saw this, or the cause may have been the chill lake wind.

Was it fancy, too, that made the women and

children, visible here and there at the windows, seem to draw back, as if to hide? The scattering tufts of grass in the front yards seemed to have given over the ambition to cover the earth with green, and were creeping under the sand. Did I imagine a burden in the air, as of grief or guilt? The shadow of the prison seemed to hover over the place. It grew oppressive.

In desperation, I resolved to climb the nearest sand-hill and view the world from that eminence. Perhaps I might find an elevation of spirits when I could survey the prospect from above. Were not poets always telling us to commune with nature, and thereby escape from fret and care; to seek the solitude of a height and see the earth grow fair beneath our feet, the mists and clouds melt into sunlight? Laboriously I crept and scrambled up the slippery side of that miserable hill. From the foot it had not looked far to the summit—perhaps not over one hundred feet—nor yet steep; but with each step forward and each slip back it seemed to grow, until, when half way up I stopped to breathe, it loomed above me like a mountain. Out to the north was Lake Michigan, blue and cold. Far distant could be seen

the smoke of steamers; nearer, the white wings of sail-boats; but all were outward bound.

Along the shore the sand dunes stretched for miles. Once, long ago, the lake is said to have covered this ground. Having been given up by water, the earth had not had thrift to reclaim the waste. Even the idle train of vagrant weeds had not wandered in to hide the barrenness. Beyond the town rose the grim, bare walls of the prison. Hundreds of men inside were wearing out the long hours of weary days in toil that was heavy and bitter, because it was enforced. Deprived of freedom of will, of liberty of body, without hope for the future, they waited—for what? For release from bondage, to spend the remnant of their lives as Ishmaelites, followed in the world by sneers and suspicion, or received, if at all, with a virtuous condescension no easier to bear. Probably they deserved their fate. Some of those men had stolen, some had forged, some had murdered; and the way of the transgressor was hard, we were told. It was right that they should suffer, then; but we Pharisees, were we without sin, that we should cast a stone? Had we not done those things that we should not, left undone that

which we should? Perhaps, my friend, yon took advantage of a man's need and made an unrighteous profit. Did you not foreclose a mortgage and distress a debtor, when you could have waited? Perhaps you did not love your neighbor, or, may be, you loved his wife too well. Such things had been known. Perhaps—but the catalogue was long. Because the law had not touched us, were we to proscribe those on whom its finger was laid? Life was bitter at best. What were we, good Lord, that we should take all the sweet of existence from any man?

This little sermon I preached to myself, for lack of a better audience; but the wind was too keen to encourage moralizing. What should I gain by climbing to the top of this hill? Each step higher would only show a wider sweep of desolation. Why should I emulate the young man of Alpine fame? He was a foolish youth and came to an untimely end. I had no ambition; besides I had brought no banner to plant at the top to commemorate my deed. It was a gloomy world. Nothing was worth while. I would go down.

The descent was rapid and undignified. Eyes, ears and clothing were full of sand. To such

irritation of mind had I come that I felt ready for reckless deeds, but I swallowed wrath and sand together and walked on.

Suddenly, in a sunny corner, between a pile of railroad ties and another of fragrant pine lumber, I came upon the old couple whom I had seen at the station. There they were—she with a napkin spread upon her lap and nibbling daintily at a bit of cake; he helping himself freely to sandwiches or chicken, now from the lap that served as table, now from the basket at their feet. Involuntarily, I paused; perhaps, to apologize for the intrusion, perhaps, attracted by the people themselves, or drawn, maybe (who knows?) by the luncheon. Who can tell afterward just how an acquaintance began? In ten minutes we were chatting briskly, and I was cheerfully helping to empty that lunch basket. I think the wife opened the conversation by saying that they had seen me climb the hill, and only wished themselves a little younger, that they might do the same.

No one is so charming to a traveler as a woman, young or old, who knows when and how to dispense with formality, and talk kindly,

yet with dignity, to a stranger. It is a rare grace, however, I have come to know.

If my old lady whom I met that day on the sand told too much of her own story, it was not her fault, but mine. I asked questions now and then to lead her on. As we talked about the weather, of the trains, of the time—drifting along in the shallows of conversation as strangers do—I became slowly conscious of a something out of the common in the manner of these old people. Just what it was was hard to define. There was nothing at all remarkable in their personal appearance. He was tall, spare, with a mild, benevolent face, and it needed only one glance to be assured that he was a minister of the Gospel. A Presbyterian minister I would have said, judging from a certain stiffness of carriage and gentle dignity, as well as from the extreme neatness of his well-worn garments. With a little surprise, I learned that he was, as he put it, "the Lord's servant in the Methodist vineyard"—Methodists of the old school whom I had heretofore met being noticeable rather for a carelessness of dress and a soldierly bearing, as of those who had conquered men. His wife was a slender, nervous little body; one of the

women who in these days are called "delicate" and of whom little is expected; one of those who, when the tests of life come, sometimes develop a power of endurance, mental and physical, marvelous to see.

"No, we don't live here," she said. "We have been spending a day in the country with some old friends, but we came up to see a young man who is in prison for murder. He was a school-mate of our son Gabriel, and had the making of a man; but he took a wild and reckless turn as he grew up, and never got on the right track again till now."

"You smile," said the old minister; "but you know that building is a place of bondage and of punishment for breaking our laws only, and not God's laws. If a man steal, we shut him up to teach him that he shall not touch our property; but, unless he repent of his sin, I hold that the Lord will punish him still, the same as if we had let him go free. This boy drank to excess, he quarreled, and the jury found that he had killed a man. For the sake of his dead mother and of our son, who is dead and had loved him, we came to see if we could help him on the way to be forgiven; and the

good God has blessed us. We found him wretched and without hope. We could give no comfort; we could only pray for help, and the comfort came. Before we came away he began to feel that there was mercy waiting for him. A little light shone out of the darkness; just a glimpse of the glory beyond. It is not for me to say that he was more guilty than another; but we all have need of grace. Cynthy and I pray that the little grain of faith in that boy's heart may take deep root, until he can bear his punishment with patience; until he can say with humility, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.'"

"It made my heart ache to leave him," said Mother Ellis (I knew her pet name must be "Mother," it fitted so well); "but God, who has been so good to us, has pity for him."

There was no want of reverence in this continual allusion to the Almighty; no cant, no grating familiarity. This old couple talked of Him as of a revered friend, with whom they had constant intercourse and in whom they had utter faith. Their simplicity was unworldly and beautiful.

"The folks down to Freedom, where we've

been living lately, wanted us to go to Chicago and see the sights, while we were so near; but John and I we're too anxious to get home." Here she looked at John and blushed, and he took her hand in his. They were like a pair of young lovers. It was curious.

Presently she went on, with a contented sigh, as if the little by-play needed some explanation:

"You see, John and I, we're going home—to a home of our own—for the first time in our lives, though we've been married forty years come June. Forty years! It's a long time, looking at it some ways; but again it only seems a little while since we were young and lived 'way back in York state. Those hills and woods were pretty to look at. I've never seen their like since. Maybe it's wicked, but I always think o' the hills 'round the New Jerusalem as being like those about the head-waters o' the Allegheny. Like as not, though, the New York hills have been cleared and 'improved' till they're bare enough and ugly; but I've no fine words to tell ye how they used to look to me. I've learned now to see beauty in a level country; but it took a long while. When we first came to Indiana, John and I, seemed as if I couldn't any way get used

to the low land. Do you remember Chestnut Hill, John, over toward Cattaraugus? If I were one o' the painter folks I could make a picture of it now. There was a tall, dead tree at the very top, with two branches reaching out like arms, making a cross that could be seen for miles. When I was young and foolish, I used to wish I were a Roman Catholic, that I might go and pray at the foot of that tree rather than in church."

"I don't remember about the hills being so pretty—'bout the same as others, I guess," said unpoetical John; "but I reck'lect the road through the pine woods. Do you, Cynthy?"

Again the faded eyes of both brightened with love that is ever young. Again came the blush on the wife's wrinkled cheek, and this time John's feeble arm went around her waist. There was silence for a little space; but I doubt not the air was filled with the fragrance of the pine forest, that their ears heard the murmur of the trees. Once more they listened with their hearts to the words of long ago, which had made that woodland path so fair a memory.

"When I first knew John he taught our district school, and used to come to my Uncle

Isaac's pretty often. Teachers boarded around in those days, and I did think he took his turn at Uncle's pretty often. I knew he was a pious young man, who'd had a call to be a preacher, and, like a silly girl, was a little afraid of him and didn't want to see him. He stayed all summer when there was no school, helping my uncle and the neighbors in haying and harvest, studying between times. In those days the best of men worked in the harvest-field. Before early apples were ripe I mistrusted what was keeping him, and somehow I had got all over being afraid of him. I had found out that he was an orphan, like myself, and had no home. I was only *staying* with Uncle Isaac, and it must have been that which made my mind turn toward him. But he never said anything, John didn't; only kept hanging 'round and looking as if he wanted to speak. John was bashful; but, though I've heard o' men too bashful to ask a girl to marry 'em, I never knew one, and I guess John 'u'd a plucked up courage after awhile, even if the revival hadn't come. 'Long in October Brother Duzan came along through that region, and held meetings that were powerfully blessed. It was early in the season for a

revival; but everybody turned out to the meetings at our school-house. I had never experienced religion then, though Uncle Isaac often made me the subject of prayer. I was giddy and thoughtless, and, like many another, I couldn't or, rather, wouldn't see how good the Lord was to me.

"Well, I went with the rest to the meetings; but my heart was hard. Seemed as if it grew harder the more the brethren and sisters prayed and exhorted, though all the young folks I knew were going forward to the mourners' bench and were being converted. One night Brother Duzan preached his dreadful sermon on future punishment of the godless, that he always kept for the crowning effort. He told, in awful words, how the unconverted sinner would finally suffer and burn in endless torment, and everybody was crying and groaning but myself. That threat couldn't soften me then, and I'm free to confess has no effect now. Then John, he led in prayer. His voice was so soft and gentle that it hushed the excitement. He besought the tender Shepherd, who loved all His sheep, to look with special care upon the playful lambs, whose willful feet refused to follow whither they were led; to

draw them back with merciful hands before they should learn, too late, that only the narrow, rocky path led to the green pastures that were beside still waters.

"I knew he prayed for me, and my heart was melted then; and, for fear the tears would come, I slipped out of the door, while the rest were on their knees. But John saw me—though how he could, with his back turned, I never knew—and I didn't get far into the pine woods alone. He began where the prayer had stopped. 'The Lord was waiting,' he said, 'for me to stretch out my hands, and He would take me into the blessed fold.' And I? What should I do but cry, as a woman always does when she should not. Then John, to comfort me, began to tell how God loved me; and from that, some way, it was easy to say how—well, no, John, I shan't tell what you said then, and don't you, either. I kind o' forgot for a minute that we were not alone, and was thinking out loud, I guess. I hope our friend will excuse me, for when she comes to be old such places in her life will stand out clear in her memory, where many another important thing has faded away.

"The next night I went to meeting, and made

a profession of religion. What could I do but praise the Lord for being so good to me, who was so undeserving. Had he not given me John, and what was I that such a blessing should be mine?"

Here, the mild eye of Reverend John looked at me over his wife's head with a mischievous twinkle. As she went on, however, his face resumed its serenity.

"We have lived many years since then. Sometimes the way has been rough and hard. We have had trials and losses; but mercy and goodness have followed us, for we have borne the burdens together. I can confess now, though I never said so to John, that one of the heaviest crosses of my life has been the wish for a home. When we were married, I knew that I was taking an itinerant Methodist preacher for better or worse (it has always been the better, never the worse, John); but I could not know till I had tried it what a wandering, unsettled life it was. Different in the early days from now, too. When we came out here, it was looked upon as more of an undertaking than going to Europe now. There were no railroads then running here and there across the country; so we came by water

on a flat-boat to Pittsburgh and in a steamboat from there. Stopped at Cincinnati to see the sights. It was a fine city then, but they say it's grown since.

"Daughter, a volume would not hold our experience of forty years. We have been sojourners, never long in one place. It's only of late years, you know, that Methodist ministers are allowed to labor more than two years in one church. Then there was the loneliness; for sometimes John would be gone on the circuit, away from his family for weeks at a time. I could not go, because of the children. We have been here and there, here and there, and used to live in pretty wild places, with few neighbors."

John took up the thread here: "I never was what is called a popular preacher," he said, with a gentle smile. "I tried to do my duty—the Lord knows that; but the people would sometimes grow anxious about building up the church, and would want a man who could bring in large accessions to the membership. I tried to win souls to the Master, with His help; but, though I trust my sheaves will contain more than weeds, the harvest in my field has been

less abundant than in many. The elders and bishops are judges of men, and they stationed me where I could do best, no doubt. Latterly, some have told me that people nowadays do not like to hear so much about Christ and Him crucified, that they prefer the religion of humanity, and that I should adapt my style to the times; but it is too late. I am too old to learn a new religion or to sugar-coat or rarefy the old one. It was a lack of faith, I fear, that caused a disappointment when they sent me to an obscure corner, a by-way, as sometimes they did. It was all the Master's vineyard, and I should have worked without a murmur; but I thought too much, perhaps, about the little earthly reward and that I could make no provision for old age. We knew the Lord had always been good to us, Cynthy. We should have trusted Him in this, for He had never failed us and He never will. 'Underneath us are the everlasting arms.' "

"Yes," said Cynthy, "the Lord has provided for us. We are to have a home of our own in our old age; a home where our children can come to visit us or to stay. As I said, I couldn't complain. It was the will of Heaven that we

should live as sojourners. We could not set our hearts upon this house or that tree, as people will. The room where the son died or the daughter married could not be kept sacred, for we must leave them; the roses and the vines which we might plant would grow to gladden other eyes than ours. Such worldly affections do not seem wrong; but they might have been a snare to us. For a year or two John has been so afflicted with rheumatism that he could not go about, and has been put on the superannuated list.

"If you know anything about Methodists, you know they do not contribute to the fifth collection as liberally as to some others, and the fund for worn out ministers is small. I suppose they do not realize the needs of any one so near them. We have always lived on a little—no one knows so well as a Methodist preacher's family how to make much out of nothing; but of late we have been sore pressed. Our children—only five are living out of ten—are scattered far and wide. Two are missionaries in India; two are teaching in the south, and our oldest son, a farmer in Texas, is the only one who is at all forehanded. He has wanted

us to make our home with him; but we couldn't quite make up our minds. Seemed as if we couldn't quite give up to go so far and get used to new things and a new country. Old people get dreadful set in their ways, you know.

"It had got to look, though, as if the Lord meant that we should go, and we were beginning to make our plans and to talk of a few farewell visits we must make.

"We have some old friends we should want to see once more, and we must take another look at the graves where our children were laid at rest. It had come to be about settled that we were to go. The Gosport Howitzer had mentioned it in its personal column, saying we should be greatly missed, when a letter came telling us the Widow Green up at Arcady had died and left us her property. We'd been up to see Mrs. Green not long before, and she talked then of leaving what she had to the Foreign Missionary Society, and we never once thought of her mentioning us in her will. But she did leave us the home. Not much, maybe you'd say—its only a little cottage and an acre o' ground; but it's a home, for all that, an' I've wanted one for so many years.

"We regret the Widow Green, of course. She was a good Christian woman, though a trifle irritable; but she'd been bedridden and so afflicted for many a day that it was her desire to go whenever the call should come. We shall have no care for ourselves the rest of our days, for the future is provided for. We are such weak creatures that faith is not always strong enough to take no thought for the morrow. We want a sign—something we can see and touch.

"Is it wrong, I wonder, to think so much about worldly things? I have planned how every room shall look. I have seeds of all the flowers I can find like the ones that grew in the yard when I was a girl. We shan't have very much money; but, with our share of the Retired Preachers' Fund and with our garden, we shall have enough. I'm spry if I be old, and always had a knack at making things grow. John's a master hand to work in the garden, too, when he's well. I tell John (don't laugh at a foolish old woman)—I tell John that this is like a wedding journey. We traveled a long way when we were married; but we didn't reach the home for forty years. John is as anxious to get there as I, but is more sensible and not so impatient.

We are going to stop at Kokomo to-night with Brother and Sister Roberts, and in the morning we shall go on home to Arcady. Home! How sweet the word sounds, John!''

There had been a movement of freight cars in our vicinity for some minutes; distant whistles of locomotives echoed around, and John had become restless. He rose stiffly, but eagerly. ''Cynthy, I think it must be near time for our train; it would never do for us to miss this one, or we shouldn't get home till to-morrow night. Let us go.''

I left them on the car, with hope and expectation in their faces, and said farewell as to old friends. ''Come and see us in our home, my daughter,'' was their last word. May the Lord bless you as he has blessed us, and good-bye!''

As I waited yet a little for my train the benediction seemed to linger. The boats were coming gayly in to shore now; the western sun shone with a warm glow upon the distant prison windows; school children laughed and shouted as if care and crime were not. Truly, the world had not all gone wrong. There was hope yet, and life was worth living after all.

. . . . . .

A year later, in the station at Indianapolis, I caught a glimpse of the two kind old faces once more. The eagerness had gone out of them there was peace and resignation instead of hope. They looked out of a car that was westward bound. A farmer, standing at my elbow, told the story.

"Father Ellis? Yes. Him and his wife i goin' West, to jine their son 'at has a cattle ranch some'rs in Texas. One o' these ye onlucky Methodis' preachers, the old man is Preached around on circuits in Indianny fer matter o' thirty or forty year. Married an' had right smart o' children, of course, as his perfes sion allays does. How they managed to scratch along an' raise them young-uns on the skimpe wages Methodist preachers do get beats me Seems 'sef people like them ort to be fed by th ravens, as Elisha was, or some sech way; o their meal-bar'ls filled up, like the widder Cruse's How's'ever, I s'pose some way's allays pervided In this case the old man had got past hi preachin' days, an' not a nickel saved fer ol age, when old Mis Green, at Arcady, north o hyer, up an' died, an' left him her little jag o

proputty. Not worth much, to be sure; but a right snug little home.

"With this an' what he'd get from the superannuated fund, they was fixed to inch along comfortable to the end o' their days. But law! what does the old fellow do, when they hadn't got more'n fairly settled, but go security fer Jim Jeffries, out Cicero road! Anybody with a grain o' business sense 'ud a knowed it was flyin' in the face o' Providence, for Jeffries allays was slack an' shif'less an' 'twan't noways likely't he'd be able to meet them notes; an' he didn't nuther, an' Father Ellis he hed to pay the debt, but it took all they was. So hyer they be, all tore up by the roots, so to speak. Doggoned pity, I say."

I went aboard the car to speak a word of greeting. The aisle was blocked by a small woman, with a large basket, and by a young miss who exchanged farewell giggles with a departing friend, interspersed with messages to their respective beaux. While I waited just behind them, the old wife's voice reached me, soft and clear, amid all the confusion. I listened, and I turned away, sure that they needed no comfort I could offer.

"The Lord has been very good to us, John. I can see now that my heart was set too much on worldly things, and it was best they should be taken away. The Lord doeth that which is good, John. He has left us each other."

"Yes, Cynthy, He has said: 'I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou shalt go.' We are old, my dear, and night will soon pass forever into the dawn of eternal day. May we enter together into the land that is no longer very far off. Let us pray, love, that death shall not part us; that, still together, when the morning is come, we may open our eyes in the Heavenly Kingdom, where a place is prepared for us."

A MOVEMENT IN ART

IT was Sunday forenoon, and Lodilla Jackson was engaged in "doing up" the morning's work. She had washed the breakfast dishes, put the kitchen in order, made the beds, helped get her young brother and sister off to Sunday-school and her mother started to church, and had got the dinner well under way. Lodilla worked during the week in the establishment of a manufacturing chemist, or, as the place was otherwise known, a patent-medicine factory, where she pasted labels on bottles and pill-boxes, afterwards putting these articles in elaborately printed wrappers. Sunday was her "off" day, but she usually spent the first half of it in the manner described in order to relieve her mother, who was also a hard-working woman, as widows with children and little money are apt to be. She was twenty years old, and a good girl. Ever since she was fourteen she had been earn-

ing money, and, with the help of her mother, her brother two years younger, and, now, of a younger sister who answered to the call of "H-e-r-e, C-a-s-h," in a dry goods shop, had almost succeeded in clearing their little house of the mortgage that encumbered it when her father died. Almost, but not quite. There was still necessity for frugality and self-denial, and little chance for indulgence in the vanities and luxuries in which girls delight. Nevertheless, Lodilla was not downcast or unhappy; far from it. She looked forward confidently to the time when debt would cease to be a burden, and, meanwhile, planned a little for that happy day.

This morning, while the corned beef and cabbage boiled merrily on the stove and the molasses cake browned in the oven, she opened the parlor door, and, dust-cloth in hand, gazed meditatively about that retreat. The room had been a source of great comfort to her mother and herself. Its possession seemed to them a visible token of their respectable social standing. It was not every one of their neighbors on the quiet little South-side Indianapolis street who could afford a parlor. A good many of the people in their part of town lived in houses so

small, or had families so large, that not a corner of their establishments could be spared for company uses exclusively. Or, sometimes, when the extra room was there, the occupant of the house could not afford the necessary outlay for suitable furniture.

The fittings for the Jackson parlor had been bought when the paternal Jackson was alive and in the enjoyment of health and good wages. The selection of this furniture had been the outcome of much thought, consultation and financial calculation on the part of the two older members of the family, Lodilla at that time being of an age when her opinion on such matters was not influential. There, as the foundation of the outfit, was the ingrain carpet, with a green and black vine of most luxuriant growth meandering over its bright red ground. There, against the widest wall space, was a haircloth sofa, now worn to a gloss that rivaled the Russia-iron stove, and with a lumpiness of surface and weakness of springs unknown to it when new. The stove, an upright cylinder, decorated with much nickel-plating, was regarded when purchased as a great ornament to the room, and, although now adapted to the use of natural gas instead of the

coal for which it was originally meant, was still held in much esteem in the household. There were several cane-seated chairs, a table which held a large glass lamp, and, on a shelf underneath, the family Bible. The crowning glory of the room was the small cabinet organ in one corner. Lodilla, at an early age, had learned to play "by ear" a few simple tunes and accompaniments, and when the family and their visitors gathered there on Sunday afternoons and sang "Shall We Gather at the River," "Hold the Fort," "Whiter than Snow, "In the Sweet Bye and Bye," and other "gospel hymns," Mrs. Jackson, for one, felt that she enjoyed many blessings, while the pleasure felt by all in the music would certainly have been far less intense at a symphony concert.

But it was not on any of these pieces of furniture that Lodilla was looking with some discontent visible in her face; it was upon the more decorative features of the apartment. Over the high wooden mantel hung a crayon portrait of her departed father, enlarged to a head of life size from a tintype of thumb-nail proportions by one of those mysterious processes practiced by peripatetic artisans. Her father had been gone

too long for her to feel any deep personal sentiment in regard to him, but the picture was invested with the interest of a sacred relic, and she had no thought of disturbing it. On the wall, over the sofa, hung that pair of chromos, "Wide Awake" and "Fast Asleep," which, when, as newspaper prizes, they found places in a multitude of homes years ago, were so universally characterized as "perfectly lovely." Lodilla was a trifle tired of these pictures, not because she detected any lack of artistic merit, but because she did not think the chubby little girl portrayed in them a pretty child. Still, she did not at this time cherish any designs against them.

Her eyes moved slowly along the row of photographs of various sizes resting on the mantel, from there passed to the framed marriage certificate of her parents hanging above the cabinet organ in a line with the framed certificates of baptism of herself and her brother and sister, then wandered from these to a large "memorial piece," framed in black and hanging in the place of honor between the windows, and rested there with especial dissatisfaction. This piece, which was printed in very black inks, with very deep

shadows and very white high lights, represented a marble tombstone of dazzling whiteness, a willow tree and a kneeling widow, who had evidently come to weep, but had changed her mind and was looking up with ecstatic gaze at an angel with powerful wings bearing the astral body of the occupant of the grave up to a heaven beyond a flock of woolly clouds. Printed on scrolls in the corners were sundry comforting texts, and below, the full name of the deceased Jackson, engrossed in an ornamental, Spencerian hand. This remarkable work of art was kindly furnished to the widow for $2.75—$1.25 off for an immediate sale—by the agent of an enterprising engraving firm soon after her husband's death.

"I do wish, ma," said Lodilla to her mother, who entered just then, "I do wish I had a photograph album—one like Nell Abbott's, a big plush-covered one. It would be so stylish on the table, and, besides, is so much better for keeping photographs than setting them around on things. And, ma—"

Here Lodilla hesitated and blushed a little.

"Ma, Joe—Mr. Little—is getting his pictures taken—great big cabinets—and if he gives me

one it would be nice to have a place to put it. He just admires Nell's album; told her he thought every family ought to have one."

It will be observed that Lodilla, capable young woman that she was, was not quite up to date in this matter, but in her behalf it must be said that she had not had the advantage of association with young society women, who claim to lead in fads and fashions of this sort, and who abandoned the album as a drawing-room ornament some time since. Her ideas as to the desirability of the article had been gathered from visits to the homes of her friends, who were still in the plush album and chromo stage of development. She had also gone with her mother on one occasion to carry a basket of mended clothing to a bachelor apartment, where, in the common sitting-room of the half dozen young men, the center-table held six large family albums arranged about the lamp, and presumably containing likenesses of the relatives, sweethearts and favorite actresses of the respective owners. Lodilla, who was much impressed with the luxury of other fittings of this room, felt that the albums were the crowning touch of elegance, and had longed for one ever since. She had

particularly desired one since Joe Little, brakeman on the Big Four railroad, had loomed on her social horizon. She wanted his picture, and fancied that he would be the more willing to bestow it if she had a suitable casket for the treasure. She was an unsophisticated girl, you see, unaware that no man needs encouragement to his vanity beyond the mere willingness on the part of a young woman to accept a likeness of himself.

Mrs. Jackson, who, mother-like, would have been glad to gratify all her daughter's tastes, looked a little troubled.

"I don't see, Dilly," she said hesitatingly, 'I don't see how we can afford one now."

"Of course not, ma; of course not," said Lodilla, with a sudden return to cheerfulness. "I know we can't afford it yet a while, and I'm not grumbling. Don't you think it. I was just wishing and talking, and that don't hurt, you know. But some day, ma, I'm going to have that album, and some day I'm going to buy some pictures and get you to put the memorial piece and the certificates in your bedroom. They've hung where they are so long I'd like a

change, and the parlor needs a little freshening up and more style."

Her mother sighed a little, without looking at all sad. Her grief for the departed Jackson was so mitigated by time that the sighs brought by allusions to him were more from habit than emotion, and no longer indicated the least depression of spirits.

"I always liked that memorial," she said. "It's so sort of satisfactory. That angel who's carrying your pa is so big and strong that you can easy enough see how he can do it. He looks so substantial. The Widow Thomas, she has one where the angel's just starting down after Thomas—a little, thin, weakly angel you can see through, and you know the old man must have weighed two hundred and fifty pounds if he did one. Of course, we don't suppose his spirit was heavy, but, somehow, there don't seem to be a fitness in sending such a puny messenger after him. It seems a pity to put that memorial out of sight in the bedroom, but young folks must have their way, I reckon. You don't think of taking the chromos down, do you?" she asked, anxiously. "Your pa gave them to me before we was married, and people come from all around

to see them, and everybody said they were just the finest pictures that had ever been seen in Cherry Corners. Old Mr. Van Lew offered ten dollars for them, because Little Wide Awake looked so much like his grand-daughter, Lucy Ann Rodibaugh. But I wouldn't a' taken twicè that then."

Dilly assured her mother that she had no intention of removing "Wide Awake" and "Fast Asleep," and hastened to look after her dinner.

The cabbage which had boiled so long and steadily, was tender, the potatoes mealy, the corned beef just as it should be, the molasses cake light and sweet and delicious—just the cake that children remember all their lives as the kind mother used to make, a memory which causes them, when they are old, to wonder why no one else can ever make as good.

And if you think the family gathered around that board and partaking of that frugal fare were not as happy as it is often given to people to be in this rather pleasant world, then you know little of the rewards of honest toil, of the delights of home provided, and its comforts earned and paid for by the efforts of all; you have forgotten the eager appetite of healthy youth, which

gives the plainest food a zest that a Lucullus feast could not offer now. And if you think Miss Lodilla, with her narrow life, her daily labor and her simple hopes and ambitions, was wasting time or energy in repinings at her lot, or fancied herself in any respect ill-used by fate, then you little understand the serene independence of the self-reliant, self-supporting American girl, who, confident of her ability to provide for herself, envies no one.

Lodilla, in her neat black skirt and shirt waist, in summer—oh, the ever-useful, universal shirt waist!—and her trim cloth jacket over the waist in winter, wended her way back and forth each day between home and factory, making one of the great army of working women, but having her own little plans and cares apart from such associations, and her maidenly dreams, just as other girls do with more time for dreams—just as all girls do while life is young and love is sweet. Joe Little, the big, fair-haired brakeman, figured a good deal in these meditations. He came to see her now and then, when he had no "run" to make, but it was always on a week-day evening. Sunday evenings he spent with Nellie Abbott, Lodilla's dearest friend. That

is, she had been her nearest and most confidential friend, the girl to whom she had confided all her little secrets, but lately the intimacy had waned somewhat, and perhaps Joe Little had, unconsciously to himself, something to do with the coolness. These ardent friendships between girls are so apt to die a sudden death when an attractive young man comes on the scene.

Joe Little had first met both the girls at a church strawberry festival, but had seemed to give preference to Nellie. The chief sign of his favor was the fact that his calls upon her were made on Sunday nights, and in their social circle this meant more serious intentions than an ordinary week-night visit. He was a musician of local repute, being known as a "boss fiddler," and this accomplishment gave him welcome admission to the best society of the neighborhood. Nellie, being something of a coquette, did not appear to care especially for him, and, for that matter, neither did Lodilla—she was too fully a woman for that—but she did care, and was learning to think about him more and more.

"I really don't think Nell's prettier than I am," she would say to herself, looking anxiously in the glass. "Nell's got a real good complex-

ion, lots better than mine, but her nose is pug and her eyes are squinty. They are; she can't deny it, and they do say cross-eyed people get to have bad tempers, even if they don't begin with them. Nell's awful peppery sometimes now when things don't go her way. It can't be her looks; it must be other things. She's got a piano and can play the 'Maiden's Prayer,' 'The Brook,' 'The Gussie Waltz' and a lot of pieces, and he likes music so. And she's got a photograph album, and, oh dear!'

You people who accept the assurances of novelists and cheap critics that women with the smallest claims to comeliness—and where is she who has none?—are satisfied with themselves, and unable to recognize the charms of their rivals—you merely show your ignorance. The normal girl is distinctly aware of her own defects, and as keenly conscious of the other girl's especial attractions. She recognizes, with a pang at her heart, the captivating effect of the little curl on her rival's white neck, the dimple in her chin, of the long lashes, under which she glances so bewitchingly. She may honestly wonder why the man in the case is so stupid and blind as not to detect that other girl's faults

of character which are so clear to her, but she never undervalues the outward allurements.

Strawberry time and its festivals were now long past, and early winter was here, but Joe Little showed no signs of change in his fancy for Nellie Abbott, except that his calls at the Widow Jackson's were rather less frequent then they had been. Lodilla began to have little heartaches, and if she cried when her sister was asleep and she could smother her sobs in the pillow, it would not be at all surprising. But if anybody guessed her sadness and its cause it was only her mother, and mothers never betray such secrets.

She worked as industriously as ever over her bottles and pill-boxes, chattered as gayly with her companions as usual, and loitered before the shop windows during the noon hour with the natural and wholesome curiosity of a healthy young woman. Love, of the lurid, all-absorbing kind we read about, that takes the appetite, banishes sleep and destroys other interest of life, is less frequent than the variety which permits other sentiments to exist simultaneously and allows the sufferer intervals of comparative comfort and cheer.

One evening Mr. Little dropped in unexpectedly and brought his fiddle—he did not call it a violin. He did not tell Lodilla that he had intended to go to Nellie's, but from across the street had chanced to see William Marvin, freight conductor on his road, enter before him and receive a warm greeting from the young lady. He "never could abide Bill Marvin," and wouldn't spend an hour in the same room if he could help it.

Lodilla made herself particularly agreeable that evening. She begged him to play for her, and he did play the "Wrecker's Daughter," "Fisher's Hornpipe," "Drunkard's Heecups" —a tune in which the plunking of the strings gives the realistic effect of hiccoughs—the "Arkansaw Traveler" and a Strauss Waltz. At least these are what he told her they were, and she thanked him and praised him and said she loved the fiddle, and could never grow tired of it; and then she sang all her songs to the cabinet organ accompaniment with its undertone of wheezy groans, suggestive of misery in its inside, and never before had she put such feeling and earnestness into tunes or words. And, after the visitor had been served with doughnuts and

a big glass of unfermented grape juice that ma put up herself, he went home, well pleased with himself and all the world, Lodilla included. She was happy, but not confident. She had still an oppressive fear of her rival.

The very next day she was drawn by irresistible attraction into a crowd in front of a big Washington street shoe-shop, and stood there with fascinated eyes watching a man in the window who painted a beautiful landscape while you waited. There he stood, painting clouds, trees, rivers and river banks, grassy knolls, mossy dells and gray rocks with lightning swiftness —laying on one color and then another, and bringing out marvelous effects before you fairly knew what he had intended.

A yellow circular thrust into her hand by a boy informed her that she could have one of these works of art free of cost if she would purchase a pair of shoes in the shop—the frame only being charged for.

A sudden ambition filled her mind. She had the money in her pocket for a pair of shoes and meant to buy them that very afternoon. Why not purchase them here instead of at the little shop on the side street, which she had always

patronized? They might cost a little more here, but then, just for once, and with this prize in view, she might surely venture the additional outlay. The frame was extra, but she would take a ninety-eight-cent one and save the amount after awhile out of the price of her winter gown. Without giving herself time to reconsider, she bought the shoes, selected the picture she had seen painted, or one precisely like it, and went her way, feeling the fearful joy of a wish gratified at the cost of wild extravagance.

The purchase created a sensation at home, and though the careful mother shook her head doubtfully over the investment of so much money for purely decorative purposes, she did not remonstrate, but joined with the rest of the family in admiring the new possession.

"You see, ma," said Lodilla, with intent to justify herself, "you see, hand-painted pictures are the thing now-days; everybody says so, and they cost like everything. Nell says her uncle's sister-in-law in Chicago paid twenty-five dollars for a painting not more than ten inches across, and Joe Little, he told me about a five-hundred-dollar picture he'd seen a man

carrying home on the train one day, and there wasn't a thing to it but two or three sheep and a dog on a side-hill. And just think! This didn't cost a cent without the frame."

The next day was Sunday, and frequent were Lodilla's visits to the parlor to look at her treasure hanging in state between the windows, in place of the memorial piece, now retired to the privacy of ma's bedroom. That night who should come but Joe Little to ask her to go to church. She accepted the invitation with sedate dignity, but with secret joy. Sunday night! That meant so much.

Nellie Abbott was there with the freight conductor, whom Lodilla mentally classified at once as "perfectly horrid," and was instantly convinced that her old friend was consumed with envy of her superior good fortune in securing the handsome and altogether more desirable escort. Filled with which thought, she smiled with great sweetness on Miss Nellie.

After services were over Joe came in with intent to sit by the sheet-iron cylinder and enjoy an hour of social converse. Lodilla wished her new art acquisition to dawn upon him unannounced, and sat in tremulous expectation of his

verdict. Finally, after talk about the weather, ma's cold, the new choir and various neighborhood topics had begun to languish, Mr. Little's glance chanced to fall upon the picture. He rose slowly and stood before it, inspecting it closely with a critical eye; then he made a telescope of his hands and viewed it from a more distant standpoint. Then he said impressively:

"Lodilla, that's a mighty good thing; it's got good points. You don't want to stand too close to one of them hand-painted oil pictures, they're apt to blur, but just get off a piece and they come right out. That lightning artist's a dandy. Shows what a painter man can do who puts his mind to it and isn't afraid to work. It must make those fellows who potter over one picture for weeks just sick to see him dash them things off at such a rate. I tell you, Lodilla," he added with animation, after a pause and further inspection, "it looks like a place on the old farm down home. I've set on that rock, or one like it, and fished for bass in just such a hole many of a time."

Then, as if with inspiration of the instant; "And say, Lodilla"—here he faltered and his voice grew soft—"say, don't you want to marry

me some day and go down there and visit the home place and the old folks?''

It was sudden, but she was equal to the emergency. His arm was around her, and her answer was whispered on his shoulder, but not so low that he could not hear.

When Christmas came, a few weeks later, he gave her a big red plush album with gilt trimmings and a little mirror set in the corner, and she felt that her cup of bliss was full.

The album was a treasure, but Lodilla will value that picture between the windows till the end of her days. It brought her love and Joe. Art education is not always a rapid process. Her children may learn to appreciate picture posters and know what Beardsleyism means, but she will be forever satisfied with her landscape painted in nine minutes as her mother before her was with the chromos.

THE QUICKENING OF A SOUL

A RELIGIOUS revival had been in progress in the churches of Greenbrier, Indiana, for six weeks—that is, in the Methodist, the Baptist and the Presbyterian churches. The Roman Catholics went on calmly with only their usual services, and were regarded with more than the ordinary measure of pity by their Protestant neighbors as persons who had never been properly converted, and were little better than benighted heathen. Episcopalians, too, continued in the even tenor of their way, and had their customary dancing and card parties, which were frowned on with greater sternness than ever by the rigid Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist brethren who had not yet reached the tolerant stage in relation to these amusements attained by members of their denominations in larger cities. Even the young people of these churches who had been wont to think longingly of the

forbidden entertainments, and sometimes to participate in them surreptitiously, now looked askance at the frivolous givers of the parties and promised themselves that by the help of the Lord they would never be led into such evil doings again, for these young people were among the fruits of the revival, and had bidden farewell to sin.

Such a wonderful ingathering of souls had not been known before in the history of Greenbrier. The revival movement began simultaneously in the three churches, and almost from the beginning a wave of religious emotion manifested itself. Young and old were affected by it; innocent children and case-hardened sinners succumbed, the first unresistingly, the second reluctantly, to its power. Every night the churches were crowded and every night penitents seeking salvation rose for prayers, or went forward and knelt at the altar as the custom of the respective sects required. Every night numbers of these penitents declared that they had found what they sought, that they had shaken off the bonds of iniquity and had entered upon a new life. Backsliders returned and renewed their faith. The interest was intense. A subdued excitement

was in the air and affected the transaction of business and household affairs throughout the town. People hurried through their evening meals in order that they might miss no feature of the coming services. Now, after six weeks, though there was no falling off in attendance, it began to be said that the meetings would soon close. As one pious but practical elder put it, the harvest was gathered, and why go raking over the ground? A few sinners remained unconverted, it was true, but they were seemingly hopeless and must be left to the Lord's mercy.

On this Friday night of the sixth week as many people as ever hastened along the streets to the places of meeting and the Methodist Church, at least, quickly filled with a congregation as large as at any time during the revival season. People had come to depend on the excitement and dreaded a termination of it. In their narrow village life the meetings took the place of drama and opera and social gayeties, with the addition of a personal and emotional element that such entertainments lack, and that held them through night after night of prayer and exhortion without wearying. A

thorough-going revival in a town of this kind has uses not contemplated by its promoters

Among the later arrivals was a group of young girls who entered a pew not far from the door. There was a little crowding and confusion as they passed in, and if Althea Hood, the youngest member of the party, had been observant of her companions she would have seen that their purpose was to give her a seat next the aisle. She saw nothing and sat contentedly enough, her thoughts absorbed in the scene about her. Althea was not yet sixteen; until these meetings opened she had never attended a religious gathering more exciting than the Sunday morning services in the Episcopal church where she went with her parents, and the regular weekly Presbyterian prayer-meeting to which she had gone with an elderly neighbor on several occasions. Her parents, easy-going and indulgent, after the American fashion, had allowed their young daughter to take her own way, and when she showed herself disinclined to confirmation ceremonies had not insisted, saying to each other it was better that she should choose the bonds she would wear when she was old enough to know her duty to God

and her fellow-creatures. So far were they out of sympathy with revival methods that, perhaps, it did not occur to them that their self-contained, unemotional child was likely to be affected by them, and, indeed, she had shown no signs of being so.

One by one her school associates had succumbed to the pleadings of the pastors, evangelists or other workers in the vineyard, had passed through a period of penitence and grief, and had finally declared, in more or less childlike and incoherent phrase, that they felt the burden of sin lifted from their souls and an assurance that they were saved by divine grace. Henceforth they would turn their backs upon the temptations of this world and would love God and praise Him for the rest of their days. So many of these school-mates had professed conversion that at last Althea was the only one of her circle who remained unmoved by the appeals that had so affected the others. She took a deep interest in all the proceedings, but seemed to make no personal application of the exhortations. She watched her companions curiously. That a change of some sort had passed over them was plain. It manifested itself in an increased se-

dateness of behavior; she was aware, too, in the presence of certain ones, of a pitying condescension, as if she were no longer on an equality with with them. Others—two or three—went about with a rapt and radiant air as if, indeed, they had entered upon a new life, and with glorified vision looked out upon a more spiritual world than the unregenerate saw. These she observed somewhat wistfully, but it was at no time borne in upon her that she, too, could share their joy.

She was not self-conscious; had she been so she would have become aware on this Friday night that unusual attention was directed her way. Long after, she learned that she had been regarded by the elder brethren and sisters as a "soul" whose conversion was, for various reasons, much to be desired, and that a determined and concerted effort to break her hitherto unmoved calm was prearranged for that evening.

All these meetings were informal. Some one began to sing, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," and the congregation joined in with more than common fervor. It was the old-time tune even more touching than the words. Althea added her clear young voice to the rest as she had done before:

"All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."

As the verse came to an end an elderly sister, passing by, touched Althea softly on the shoulder and whispered:

"You should come, dear, and give yourself to Jesus so you could sing that with your heart."

An aged brother lifted up his quavering voice in prayer. He was illiterate, but it is piety and not erudition, we must believe, which counts with the Maker of men.

"Oh, Lord," he prayed, "Oh, Lord, there ain't but a few sinners left in this yer congregation, an' ef you'll jest pour out the speret upon us to-night, jest pour it out free, we'll fetch 'em in. They cain't stand out agin that power; they'll realize thet they're pore an' needy. Bless us, Lord, bless us right now!"

Then came the pleading hymn:

"Come ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love and power;
He is able, He is able,
He is willing, doubt no more."

The exhortations of the old pastor, commonly so fatherly and gentle, had an almost youthful fire that night. He preached the wrath of God as he had not done in all the weeks. The guilt of the one withholding complete submission was pictured in the darkest colors. Repentance for sin, acceptance of atoning grace, love for the Son, were the only means of averting this wrath. Neither gifts nor praise, neither good works nor clean living, could avail if the doer of righteous things walked not humbly by faith in God. Delay meant death. Let the young yield up their hearts now, or else risk the loss of life eternal.

After him came a young evangelist who was becoming noted for his success as an "awakener." He was a thin-faced, long-necked young man, spoken of by admiring women as ascetic and spiritual. Discriminating observers would have been apt to class him as dyspeptic and his eloquence as sounding brass; nevertheless, with his peculiarly musical voice and pleading manner he won attention where others failed. Althea Hood had dreamed dreams about this young man. If she had understood the secrets of her own foolish little child-heart she would have been aware that his presence was one of

the attractions that had made her attendance so constant at the meetings. She was not in love with him—the sentiment had no such strength as that. She was simply experiencing the first faint flutterings of femininity roused to life by masculine influence.

The evangelist clasped his hands before him in the praying-Samuel position, and tossing back his long mane began to plead with those lambs which had wandered away from the Shepherd's loving arms. He said nothing of sin or of guilt, repentence or forgiveness. He only called upon the wanderers to come where love, and shelter, and tender care awaited them. He quoted beautiful poetic passages from the Bible and comforting promises; he talked of green pastures and still waters, of light, and life, and love, but love was chiefly his theme. It was divine love, of course, but the speaker's voice was soft and low; his eyes were directed toward Althea, and she, poor child, thrilled at his tones and only half comprehended his words. In conclusion he held out his hands entreatingly and sang:

"Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down;
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown."

These little tenor solos, interspersed through his talks, were distinctive features of his methods and were considered especially effective. The revival spirit was fully aroused now. Song and prayer quickly succeeded each other. Ejaculations of praise and murmurs of ecstatic feeling were heard from all parts of the room in antiphonal likeness. Brethren and sisters, gifted as pleaders, or led by sense of duty to exercise their influence, moved among the congregation, seeking out the few who, as the accepted phrase was, had not yet "confessed Christ." One after another besought Althea to yield up her heart. Tears fell from the eyes of the old pastor as he urged her to go forward to the "mourners' bench" and take what might be her last chance for salvation.

They were singing fervently just then:

> "Alas, and did my Savior bleed,
> And did my Sovereign die?
> Would He devote that sacred head
> For such a worm as I?"

"But I am not a vile sinner," she protested. "I am not a worm," and would not go.

Her school-mates who had so lately read their own titles clear added their petitions; her teacher

rged upon her the duty of subduing her pride nd indifference; women and men for whom she ad the greatest respect, came to her and ointed out the strait and narrow path. They ft her still unmoved so far as outward inications showed. The young evangelist approached. Her lips set together firmly; her ands, already moving nervously, clenched themelves; the strain was becoming great, but, "I ill not go," she whispered to herself. He eached out his hand. "Come, little sister," he aid. "Come; the Good Shepherd wants this amb that is outside the fold. Come." And he arose and followed him.

In front of the pulpit was a long bench at hich already were two penitents—an old man ho was converted at every revival and as regularly became a backslider when the excitement ubsided, and a young man who was commonly poken of in the community as a "hard case." She knelt beside them mechanically.

The congregation was singing with great volme of sound, "There's a Land That Is Fairer han Day." The young evangelist turned and fted his hand. There was silence, and with ands clasped and eyes uplifted he sang "The

Ninety and Nine." It was like a solo by a famous tenor in an opera—a feature of the evening that women, at least, would not have missed for the world. He sang it through, and when he reached the last triumphant strain excitement was at hysterical height:

"But all through the mountains thunder-riven,
And up from the rocky steep,
There rose a cry to the gate of heaven,
'Rejoice! I have found my sheep!'
And the angels echoed around the throne,
'Rejoice! for the Lord brings back His own!'"

There was a chorus of amens. "Bless the Lord!" shouted one brother; "Praise His name!" exclaimed another. There were groans and inarticulate cries. A woman uttered a piercing shriek, and falling prone upon the floor in the aisle, lay there like a log. No one heeded her; she had the "power" and would come to herself in good time. Breathing was short and quick; faces were flushed; women and girls wept silently, or with hysterical sobs, as their temperaments constrained them; there was a rhythmical swaying of bodies; some one prayed loudly but no one heard; the amens, the groans, and the bless-God's were still louder. Althea, half

errified by the tempest of emotion about her, her elf-control broken at last, sobbed convulsively. A mother in Israel knelt beside her and entreated her to open her heart and let love and orgiveness come in. The old man at the nourners' bench rose with a joyful shout and nnounced that he felt to rejoice that he had nce more been anointed with the oil of gladness nd had obtained forgiveness for his sins.

"Come let us anew our journey pursue" began a voice near by, and the congregation took p the strain.

The young man, who was a hard case, rose nd stammeringly declared that he had given is heart to God and hoped, by His help, to ve a Christian life from that time on.

As suddenly as Althea's tears had begun they eased and her excitement was over. She rose o her feet just as her favorite hymn was being ung—favorite, because of the pathetic minor adences, not the words whose sentiment was eyond her experience yet. Unconscious as a ird, she joined in:

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God! I come."

The brethren and sisters near the front pressed around her with congratulations. The pastor took her hand and patted it, his face beaming.

"My daughter, I knew there was a blessing for you if you would take it. Add your word of testimony now."

"But I did not mean," she said with startled emphasis. "I am not—I have not had a blessing."

They saw her lips move, but no one listened to her words, and the song drowned them:

"Hallelujah 'tis done! I believe on the Son,
I am saved by the blood of the crucified One!"

Following this triumphant outburst came the joyful hymn:

"How happy are they
Who their Savior obey,
And have laid up their treasures above!
Tongue can not express
The sweet comfort and peace
Of a soul in its earliest love!"

She was counted among the converts. The pastor thanked God for her in his prayer, and was a shade less enthusiastic in thanks for the rescue of the backslider and the hard case.

Althea did not join in the singing of the dox-

ology. All at once a meaning seemed to come into the words which hardly had a meaning to her before.

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow!"

Could she really praise God? Praise Him for what?

As she passed slowly down the crowded aisle hands were stretched from every side to grasp hers in the kindly Methodist fashion; many a blessing was invoked upon her by the older brethren and sisters; younger friends said they were glad she had become one of them. She only smiled faintly and was silent. Silence seemed cowardly, but how could she tell them that it was not true, that she had experienced no change of heart, that she was the same in every way that she had been the day before? Or could it be, and she grasped at the thought, could it be that a change had come and she did not know it? She had been excited, had wept and then become calm like all her newly converted friends. Then her eyes fell upon the hard case as he met his mother—an old woman with care-worn, tear-stained face, transfigured, now, with joy. His reckless, defiant expression

had given way to a look of—what was it?—determination, gladness, high endeavor? She felt that he had attained something she had not and her hopeful thought for herself vanished.

Pressed by the crowd into the angle of a doorway she heard the young evangelist say in confidential tone to a leading member: "In this business you have to make a study of people. Different methods must be worked on old and young men, old women and young ones. Not many 'll hold out if you go at 'em in the right way. I felt sure I'd fetch the Hood girl. You know they say I have a taking way with the ladies," and he laughed foolishly.

"I'm powerful glad ye fetched her, it makes the even one hundred and fifty—I don't count the other two who went for'ard to-night, they won't stick—and one hundred and fifty is a mighty good showing in a town like this; they'll build up the church amazing. Besides, her father, Colonel Hood, 'll be madder'n a hornet. He don't b'lieve in religious revivals. He's 'Piscopal."

The old man chuckled in an ungodly way. Althea, hurrying by, felt, with the changing impulse of youth, that she hated them both, and,

vith mist of romance suddenly and cruelly cleared, she saw the evangelist as a lean, lank, commonplace, self-conceited youth, and an innocent, girlish ideal of manliness was forever gone. It was not a happy frame of mind for a new convert.

A few months after the revival, which remains famous in the annals of Greenbrier, life began for Althea Hood. This first experience of life grew out of acquaintance with death. The destroyer came suddenly to her father, not yet an old man. Under the shock the mother drooped and soon followed her husband.

Althea, with the bewilderment which comes to the young who encounter the great mystery, mourned and suffered as only the young do—without the philosophy, the resignation, sometimes the peace and hope that bereavement brings to age. Pious friends talked to her of the duty of submission—she was still rebellious; of God's love—she did not know their meaning. The experience of the revival had left her without religious feeling; it was as if her heart, which might have unfolded as naturally to spiritual truth as a rose opens under sun and dew,

had ceased to grow, like a bud when torn apart by rough hands.

Life was not easy. Poverty was her portion, and a home with uncongenial relatives until school days were past and she became a teacher among new scenes and new people in the capital of the state.

There are teachers who profess to love their calling for its own sake. Being truthful in other matters they must be believed in this. Althea Hood was not one of these. She found teaching irksome, and when David Phillips asked her to marry him she promptly said yes, and gladly gave up her work.

Althea loved her husband with as deep an affection as she was capable of entertaining at her stage of development.

In occasional moments of introspection Althea realized that she did not have that absorbing, overwhelming affection for him that novelists' heroines entertain for their chosen lovers, but satisfied herself with the theory that such ardent emotions did not belong to real life.

David Phillips was a prosperous, energetic business man several years older than she—a quiet, self-contained person who smiled indul-

gently over his young wife's æsthetic tastes, her fondness for poetry and romance, her little outbursts of sentiment, her feminine ways in general. If he did not seem to sympathize he, at least, did not antagonize, and she was fairly content in her little daily round. There were the housekeeping and social duties, the music, the reading, the various odds and ends that fill the time of the woman who has no ambitions outside her home, no consciousness of work to be done there—these made up her routine. There were no ecstacies, no deep emotions; it was a narrow life, and yet a day came when she looked back to this period of peace as one of enviable bliss. There are but few heights of joy in any life, and, in most, many depths of grief, so it may be that the dead level of calm content, the absence of emotion, is the happiness to be chosen—if choice were in human power.

Althea attended church during this time. It was respectable to do so; it had been her early habit, and, besides, the beauty of the Episcopal ritual pleased her. She could join in the prayer, "Have mercy upon us miserable sinners," with an intellectual pleasure in the sonorousness of the response, but with as little

understanding of heart as when the brethren at the revival besought her to seek forgiveness for sin. But though she did not comprehend, sometimes she wondered if all those who joined in the prayers were as unmoved as she, and, if not, what secret they possessed that she did not.

Then, one happy day, a new interest entered into her life. Her baby came and her soul began to grow. It is not always so, though it is the fashion to talk of mothers as gifted with a world of new spiritual and moral graces. To those who look on, it too often seems that motherhood means a narrowing of vision and an intensity of selfishness. But Althea's horizon widened. With her own child in her arms she looked out upon a new world. Her eyes were suddenly opened to the needs of other little ones. A vast pity filled her heart for the waifs, the hapless creatures who are born to poverty and know suffering almost with their first breath. "The cry of the children" appealed to her as it had never done before. Her eyes once open, it was strange what vistas of both joy and sorrow spread before them; she questioned why she had not seen these things before.

Her little son waxed fat and fair. He was

the delight of her days; waking and sleeping he was in her dreams. She rejoiced in his infantile graces, but her thoughts ran on and on and pictured him as he should be as time went by—the sturdy lad loved by his playmates, the youth excelling his companions in all noble undertakings, the strong, proud man honored by the world, but through all the changes her own dear son, still loving and true.

Her husband looked on, pleased at the sight of the maternal joy, the look a little wistful at times, perhaps, because the wife was so lost in the mother that he seemed half forgotten and quite unessential to her happiness.

Then one terrible day the baby died, the little child who had lacked no care that love could give. Out of the mother's arms they took the fair dimpled body for the last time; they folded the rose-leaf hands that would flutter upon her bosom no more; they took him away, the life of her life, and laid him under the flowers.

Is there agony for any human creature greater than that of the mother bereaved?

She mourned in bitterness and without hope. Between her and the "land that is fairer than day," the land of which she once sang so un-

thinkingly, rose a wall through which came no answer to her resentful cries. In her wretchedness she turned against her husband. She fancied that he was not sympathetic, that he really missed their child but little. She brooded over this imaginary trouble in addition to the genuine woe and brought herself into such a state of antagonism that nothing he could do pleased her, and she withdrew her companionship from him to a degree that left him bewildered and helpless. He ascribed her irritability and coldness to her recent bereavement. It was really one of those critical situations that occur in most married lives before the art of living together in harmony has been mastered. The little rift may close itself or become a chasm never to be bridged.

David recommended change of scene. Would she go south and get the early spring breezes? Would she come with him on a trip to New York which business compelled him to take? Would she go anywhere her fancy preferred and win back health to mind and nerves? These were questions he asked her, but to all she coldly answered "no." She "wished to be alone," she said, and he left her reluctantly.

Scarcely had he started on his journey when a thing happened the like of which has been known to occur among people we hear of; people of whom our friends know and, whispering, tell the tale. A woman called to see Althea—a woman who had possibly been comely at one time in her life but was no longer, a creature unprepossessing enough now. With her was a child two or three years old. It was not a pleasant story she told, but she told it in a way convincing to her hearer. She was the woman, she said, who should have been David Phillips's wife; the child was hers and his, but he had cast them both off. They were in want; would Mrs. Phillips help them?

She gave the woman money and sent her away in haste, telling her never to return, and that she did not believe her story; but she never doubted its truth for a moment. Would a woman, even a lost creature, advertise her shame needlessly? She had never dreamed that her husband, David Phillips, had ever been other than upright and honorable, and had heard and thought but little in her life about evil of this sort. But she had seen that David was changed; he was growing more quiet and reti-

cent every day. Perhaps he was losing his love for her, and he had not seemed to care when the baby died. Her little son! And he was the father of her son.

A whirlwind of rage swept over her at the thought that he had covered the memory of this lost darling with shame, that he had brought humiliation upon her. How could she go on and live in the same world with him and with—those others. A wild impulse to take herself out of it came to her; a vision of the river, deep and dark, rose temptingly.

Her wrath turned against the man who had deceived her. At times she longed for him to be there that she might face him with her knowledge of his iniquity; then, with revulsion of feeling, rejoiced at his absence. No one seeing her then could charge her with being unemotional. Vindictive passion stirred her one hour, shame weighed her down the next, then followed a wave of grief for the vanished days of peace. Life was not the joyous thing it had seemed in the old Greenbrier days; now, she knew that it meant tears, and heartache, and sorrows worse than death. She wrote brief notes in reply to her husband's letters. Why she postponed

vriting him that their lives could not go on to-
gether she hardly knew, since she had deter-
mined to send such a letter. One day she be-
gan the task. Before she had finished illumina-
ion came. She knew suddenly that she loved
he man she was preparing to put out of her life
—loved him in spite of his sins, of his wrong to
herself, loved him with an intensity she had not
dreamed of when she married him. It was not
he love she had read of and had not thought to
experience, it was a thousand times stronger.
She did not want it so; she resented the truth
and would have denied it to herself but could
not.

For days she fought with her impulses, and
hen resisted them no longer. She was too
rank and transparent to dream of concealing her
knowledge of the wretched secret, and, besides,
she had conceived a plan whose carrying out
nvolved mutual explanation and consultations.

With trembling haste, now that she had re-
olved upon a course, she wrote the letter tell-
ng him her story of the woman and child, of
her grief and resentment, and, finally, of her
ove and willingness to forgive and receive him
back. Then she added—it was the crowning bit

of self-sacrifice—"I want to provide for the child; if you like, I will find it and bring it home."

She sent the letter and waited. With all her spirit of forgiveness and her impatience for his return she was not unmindful of the fact that she was doing an unusual thing, one he would have no right to expect, a truly Christian act. Indeed, the spirit of condescension, of goodness stooping to the sinner, was manifest in the letter.

She did not know where the woman and child might be found, but spent those days of waiting in wandering about a quarter of the city she had known but little of, thinking that by chance she might find them. Once she caught a glimpse of the woman in a passing street car—a hard-faced creature in tawdry garb she looked in the pitiless sunlight.

Hurrying home, a little belated, one evening, she was driven by a sudden spring shower to the nearest shelter, which chanced to be a dilapidated warehouse, hardly more than a shed, from whose open door the sound of singing issued. By the dim and flickering light of a few lanterns hung about she saw a motley company

eated on improvised benches, or standing next ıe wall. There were men who looked like amps and others, better clothed, who might e worse. There were women who might be onest mothers of families, others who as surely ere not. Unwholesome looking children of arious ages looked curiously on.

But one voice was heard; evidently the crowd as not familiar with the words of the song. The ıan standing by an upturned box with a cheap lass lamp upon it was the singer. "There Is a ountain Filled With Blood," was the hymn; e sang one stanza through alone. As he be- an the second a woman joined in in a thin, un- ertain soprano:

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away,
Wash all my sins away."

With the third verse the woman stopped and t down, sobbing loudly, but not before Althea ıd seen her face; it was that of the woman she as seeking.

The man by the box began to speak in a low, onversational tone. As he stepped out of the

shadow into the light of the lamp she recognized, with a start of surprise, the "hard case" of the Greenbrier revival. He did not look like a hard case now. He was shabbily dressed, but his thin, dark face wore an expression of earnestness, of absorbed interest, of what even seemed like love for the people about him.

"I was vile, like that thief," he said; "I defied God. I cared nothing for Him; I believed He cared nothing for me. I broke His laws recklessly and rejoiced in my wickedness, or I pretended to rejoice, though I could never quite quiet the pricks of conscience, for I knew better. I had a mother who loved me and prayed for me. One day I suddenly saw all my guilt and was without hope, but light came and forgiveness even to me—to me!—to me!—and since that day 'redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.'"

Then he pleaded with his hearers in impassioned but simple language to leave their sins and live good lives for the sake of the One who died upon the cross, for their own sakes, for the sake of those about them. It was not a sermon; it was not even a connected discourse; it was neither learned nor logical, but it was a cry

rom the heart, and the listeners knew it and vere moved accordingly.

Althea knew that she had encountered again he mysterious something which had passed her y. The hard case whose conversion at Green-rier had been so lightly regarded that he was ot counted in by the revivalists when they 'made up their jewels," had found there the piritual gift that made him a new man. Some-imes she had suspected that those who professed o have consciously won this blessing deceived hemselves, but there was something genuine ere. But she could not speculate on this now. She stepped to the side of the yellow-haired girl nd touched her arm.

"Where is your baby?" she whispered. The irl looked up with red eyes, stupidly. "My aby?" she repeated wonderingly, and then omprehended. Through the artificial color on er cheeks a genuine red showed. She dropped er head and then lifted it and looked straight n Althea's eyes.

"I have no baby, lady; I never had. I was ıst fooling you. I wanted money. I never new your husband only by name, and he never aw or heard of me, I reckon. I read in the

paper that he'd gone to New York. I wanted money, and I'd seen you, and I guessed you were, well—an easy mark, and so I fixed up the story. I thought you looked, too, as if you had no sympathy for such as me, and maybe that made me pick on you to give you a little trouble instead of another. You didn't know a body could be so wicked, did you? The baby is Mrs. Caffrey's, across the street. His mother's good to me and lets me take care of him when she goes washing. I've been a bad girl, lady, but I'm going to be better. I'll pay you back that money some day."

But Mrs. Phillips was gone. She flew across the street. The door of the two-room shanty was open and she stepped in after a hasty knock. The baby—she would have known it anywhere—lay asleep on a bed; a woman stood at a table ironing.

"Are you Mrs. Caffrey, and whose baby is this?" asked the visitor.

"Oim Mrs. Caffrey, and thot boy is mine, born in howly wedlock, av ye plaze, an' wud have a father this blessed minute av ut hadn't bin for the haythenish shtame cars thot wudn't shtop to rouse up a man who'd set down on the thrack to

est as he was comin' from a wake. An' phwat vud ye be likin' to know for, ma'am?''

"It isn't Maggie Miller's baby?"

"Maggie Miller—the likes av her! My little Patsy asked av his mother was an ondacent fa-nale—him that had an honest father married to is mother by the praste. Och, the impident uestion! Maggie, she's got no baby, betther's er luck. Not thot Maggie's so bad, poor ody. She's good to little Patsy, an' she's over ow helpin' thot preacher man sing the hymns he used to hear in the counthry when she was a etther gurrl. She'd be betther askin' the Holy Mother to shpake for her, an' be confes-in' her sins to Father Ryan; but av this ware-ouse religion kapes her from divilmint it's not ne likes av me to shpake ill av it. But phwat s it, leddy?"

The lady, with a strange look on her face, pologized confusedly for her visit and hurried p the street, Mrs. Caffrey peering after her and alking volubly to herself. Her mind was in a umult. She had condemned her husband on ne first charge against him, without question nd without giving him a chance for defense. he had emphasized the injury by offering to

extend pardon to him. Pardon! When she was the one to need forgiveness! And he was away and she wanted to see him at once.

In the morning came a message. There had been a railroad accident at a junction fifty miles away. David Phillips had been seriously hurt. Would she come?

She was on the train in an hour. It seemed years since the calm, uneventful period of her early married life when she had sometimes fancied that she was born with a limited capacity for emotion. She knew better now; depths had been sounded and were stirred. She had learned what love and suffering meant, and more suffering was before her. The thing that most bewildered her was being suddenly and unquestionably in the wrong. She had been accustomed always to be right, or to think herself so. She had never been a suppliant to God or man. She wondered if she had been self-righteous, and was filled with sudden humility. She was ready to humble herself before man, at least. The train did not move fast enough. Would David forgive her? Would she reach him in time?

She found him at a farm-house with a broken leg and many bruises, but he would live. She

had long explanations to make, but as she knelt by his side could only gasp:

"I was wrong; it was not true; I was mistaken."

He drew her face to his, and she knew pardon was hers, and love.

"It hurt me, sweetheart, that you believed the story," he whispered, faintly, "but when you were ready to take me back in spite of what you believed, when you could forgive such a wrong, I knew you loved me—and—and I had been afraid."

He closed his eyes with a look of utter peace and the doctors decreed silence, but she sat by his side through the day, nor knew that the hours were long.

The miracle of spring was being wrought upon the world. But yesterday the trees had been bare; to-day in the sunshine their buds had burst into green, the peach trees were pink with bloom, the dandelions shone yellow in the grass. A sense of growth, of transformation, was in the very air.

What comes so suddenly to buds and flowers may come to the human soul.

Under the sod and through the harsh reign of

frosts and snows the way had been prepared for the wonder of the trees. Motherhood, bereavement and tears, injured love and humiliation, and the later happiness had done their silent work upon the woman nature. The time had come for a new birth.

In the dusk she left David and wandered down a grassy lane. In the western sky beyond the broad prairie, the gorgeous tints of the sunset faded into blue and pearl. The soft, damp air brought the smell of the fresh earth from the newly plowed field; a spicy odor from a wild apple tree, now a mass of pale pink, was wafted to her. A robin chirped sleepily among the young maple leaves overhead. The tender, elusive charm of the season of growth was all about her. But was it only this that so moved her, she vaguely wondered. She had known the joy of spring before, and it was not like this. Her soul seemed lifted up. She felt dimly that a greater glory than she had known was just beyond.

Inside the open door of a little cottage down the lane a woman sat by a lamp sewing and singing. Her voice rose sweet and clear:

"Just as I am—though tossed about.
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
With fears within and foes without—
O Lamb of God, I come!"

All her life she had been familiar with the hymns that expressed the thoughts of the world seeking God—hymns of penitence, of agony, of peace and praise, of ecstatic worship—and she had not known their meaning. All at once light came. She lifted up her arms.

"O Lamb of God! O Lamb of God!" she whispered. The cloud that had obscured her spiritual sight lifted. She saw herself an imperfect human creature, but, with all her faults and frailties, an atom of the divine essence; her little life a part of the divine plan; her sorrows and trials the discipline inflicted by love. Before her suddenly appeared her lost child, the child she had mourned without hope, a glorified vision. Its baby hands beckoned her; its sweet lips smiled. Love for child and husband, the old earthly love, filled her bosom with a power she had not known, but there was a love greater than this. Could that be hers, also?

She tried to pray, but could not form her

thoughts. Was that a touch upon her hair, a whisper in her ear? Surely she heard the words:

"Come unto Me all ye that are heavy laden." She stood trembling as in a holy presence. Her face turned toward the sky.

"O Lamb of God—O Lamb of God, I come."

He heard in heaven. Joy enfolded her as a garment. Divine peace fell upon her. Her soul was born.